NOW & THEN

THE APPALACHIAN MAGAZINE

CENTER FOR APPALACHIAN STUDIES AND SERVICES EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

Vol. 30 No. 2 $8.00

THE BEST OF THIRTY YEARS

PART I (1984-1999)

THEN

This photograph by Mike Smith appeared on the first cover of Now & Then *in 1984.*

Now & Then first published in Fall 1984. That issue's introduction from editor Fred Waage explained the magazine's goal: "Our title expresses the dual experience of Appalachian culture, looking back to the roots of its traditions, and following these traditions' continuity through the present, as they presevere or are deplaced by new ways of living, thinking, and feeling."

NOW

Mike Smith, professor of photography at East Tennessee State University, has a long history with Now & Then. *He continues to see Appalachia in new and interesting ways as evidenced by this recent photograph.*

The Best of Thirty Years
Part I (1984-1999)

Winter 2015
Volume 30, Number 2

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UPCOMING THEMES & DEADLINES

The Best of Thirty Years
Part II (2000-2014)

Appalachian Justice
Deadline for submissions: August 29, 2015

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NOW & THEN
THE APPALACHIAN MAGAZINE

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Editor's Notebook

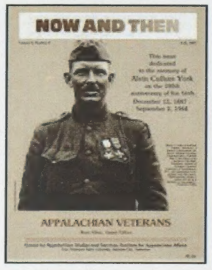
When we set about choosing works for this "Best of" issue, we quickly saw the dilemma we had set for ourselves: How does one choose between right and right? To us, the task of selecting the best works from thirty years of *Now & Then* felt like choosing among one's children.

After soliciting help from former *Now & Then* editors, staff, and longtime readers, our already lengthy list of possible inclusions grew even longer. Finally, we decided the only course was to divide the "Best of" issue into two parts: Part I (1984-1999) that you now hold, and Part II (2000-2014), due out in June of 2015.

The Appalachian-born, twentieth-century painter and etcher, John French Sloan, is quoted as saying, "Every good picture leaves the painter eager to start again, unsatisfied, inspired by the rich mine in which he is working, hoping for more energy, more vitality, more time—condemned to painting for life."

Like Sloan, we are inspired by the rich mine of writers, poets, essayists, interviewers, and reviewers who have graced the pages of *Now & Then.* We hope that you, the reader, share Sloan's eagerness to start again, anticipating the "Best of, Part II" next June. In the meantime, we wish you more energy, more vitality, and more time for the joy of reading. ❖

The staff of *Now & Then: The Appalachian Magazine*



"Appalachian Veterans" (vol. 4, no. 3)

Medal of Honor

Fred Chappell

I Am One of You Forever, Fred Chappell's 1985 novel (published by Louisiana State University Press) introduced a lively North Carolina family, the Kirkmans. The author is now working on a new book about the same family. Medal of Honor *is an excerpt from that work. In it, the father of the family, Joe Robert, teaches high school. At this point in the story, he has been asked to see Mr. Pobble, the principal. Joe Robert believes he is about to be upbraided (or even fired) for some practical jokes he pulled on his fellow teachers. Instead he finds the parents of a former student are waiting in the principal's office to see him.*

"Good morning, Joe Robert," the principal said. "I'm sure you remember the Dorsons, Pruitt and Ginny."

"Oh yes," my father said. He shook hands with Pruitt and nodded to his wife. "How are you all getting along?"

They gave no answer to his question, and he had expected none. They were silent farm folk, both of them from the true oldtime mountain stock, shy and ill at ease in any public situation. Pruitt owned a rocky little ancestral farm far in the obscurities of Bear Creek Cove. Hard to imagine how he'd ever fed and clothed a family on those flinty acres, but he had done so and done it well—four stalwart boys and two devout and industrious girls. Salt of the earth, as people said, and my father thought that the phrase lacked force.

He had met them before, in painful public circumstances. Their son Lewis had returned home a highly decorated war hero. He had sustained a terrible chest wound in Italy. Surgery had done wonders, but he was a changed young man, hollow-eyed now and haunted. The wound was beneath his shirt. Didn't that make it more terrible, hidden away? Was he not still always in pain? There would be no way to know; Lewis was his parents' child, he didn't care to display personal feeling.

But on this occasion it was his duty to do so. He had to give a public speech and exhibit himself before neighbors and strangers as a bona fide hero. My father had commiserated profoundly. Quiet almost to the point of utter silence, Lewis would turn scarlet when called upon in class and drop his head and mumble inaudibly. Still he was a good student, interested, if not precisely curious, following everything that went on in class—especially in the General Science class—with unfaltering attention. They had never been close, but my father felt a bond with Lewis; he admired his serious and gentle comportment and his willingness toward his life.

Not the sort of boy expected to turn out a war hero. But who can predict courage or desperation of whatever accidents and qualities account for valor in combat? It seemed to my father that Lewis' quietness had been an index to his courage all along. It wouldn't have been easy for him even to attend school, all that youthful racket and enforced socializing. Always easy to think of Lewis as a solitary figure in the fields and woods, happier away from people, happy with his dog and the slow seasons of nature. It was the mountaineer strain, as fine in Lewis as it might have been a hundred years ago.

The War Department had arranged a Lewis Dorson Day in Tipton. There must have been hundreds of like celebrations across the country, the effort to sell war bonds tied in with local heroes. But there could have been few young men for whom the occasion was so excruciating as for Lewis. He would have faced the guns at Anzio with more equanimity.

On the softball field in the middle of town they had set up a platform, tacked bunting around it and draped it with flags; and from a fortunate high school in the next county they borrowed a marching band. The front page of

the weekly Tipton *Intelligencer* was given over to Lewis, five separate stories and four photographs, including a picture of the Dorson homestead, a weathered tin roof shack perched on a rocky ridge, a tilted well housing on one side and a smokehouse on the other. In the grainy background of the photo appeared the dim lines of the outhouse.

Pruitt and Ginny had refused to speak, but did agree to sit on the platform and rise when introduced. The Dorsons' family Baptist minister offered a prayer as fierce as a tiger and too long by a mile. Lewis had chosen my father as his favorite teacher, so the task fell to him to say that Lewis was a good boy and a fine student. But he said instead that Lewis was a fine boy and a good student. Then the mayor—whom my father couldn't abide (he was also a member of the school board)—had told the stories of Lewis' bravery in combat. By now we all knew these stories by heart; yet we were glad to hear them again. They composed a transfixing account of cool self-possession and resourcefulness. Even Lewis listened closely, but with an expression suggesting that he could not quite credit the words.

Then it was his turn. He rose and walked slowly, not lifting his eyes from his feet until he had reached the safety of the lectern. He spoke just the phrases that time and occasion required. There was nothing personal, nor even distinctive, in what he said; he read from typewritten pages undoubtedly supplied him by the War Department. But he read audibly and correctly, his hands not shaking too badly and his trembling knees hidden by the lectern panel. Before our proud eyes he mastered what might have been the worst fear he'd known until that hour. No one would remember the modest platitudes, but many would remember his red-faced bravery.

Then it was over and Lewis shook hands with all the people on the platform, even—blindly—his mother, and the band played, and a surprising number of people filed to the booth at third base to invest in War Bonds. There was a strong consensus of opinion: *Ole Lewis done real good, didn't he? Mighty fine speech.*

And that was the last time my father had seen Pruitt and Ginny Dorson—six years ago, during his first brief stint as a teacher. They had hardly changed, though of course they looked out of place, bewildered here in the principal's office. Maybe Pruitt was a little leaner, had weathered a little more grayly; and maybe Ginny had put on a few gentle pounds. Otherwise he could find little difference—except in the air of dark sorrow about them at this moment. Their quietness had hardened.

They all took seats in the uncomfortable straight chairs, and Mr. Pobble spoke to my father in a set level tone like a doctor delivering a medical verdict. "We have some bad news, Joe Robert. Lewis is dead."

"Oh Lord," my father said. But he had known as much. It would take the most serious sort of business to bring Pruitt and Ginny to the school, to a large public place. "That's an awful thing to hear." He was glad that Don Pobble had spoken; Pruitt Dorson might not have managed to say the words. There was more tact in Pobble than my father had recognized. "When did it happen?"

"It was last week, wasn't it, Pruitt?" Pobble asked.

He spoke slowly, softly, but his hill twang was as distinct in the office as mandolin notes. "It was in Detroit city, where Lewis was helping them people make cars. We didn't know nothing till last Sunday and we went up there and they buried him on Tuesday. They had doctors going over him after he was dead, I don't know why. And then we couldn't bring him back home.

"He's buried in Detroit?" my father asked.

"He's buried up there in the biggest graveyard you could think of. A multitude of stranger graves. And then we couldn't bring him back."

He knew how much that meant to them, how they would want him in their little Baptist churchyard. Or maybe on one of the back hilltops there was a family plot, shining with birdsong, with wildflowers.

"How did it happen?"

Ginny Dorson stopped looking into my father's face now and her mouth thinned to a line like a razor cut and her hands clenched in her lap. That was as much grief as she would show here. She was not defeated, not broken, but her raw determination made her look more alien than ever, painful in her blue flowered dress.

"He was shot with a pistol," Pruitt said. "That was all they would tell me. Them policemens couldn't say no more than that. They didn't nobody know Lewis up there. He was just killed and nobody knowed anything, nobody didn't care. He was just a stranger in that place, and then he was dead there."

"It's a terrible thing," my father said. "I didn't even hear he'd gone up to Detroit."

"He went to find a job. That's what he said he did. But it wasn't no job, he was all restless. He didn't need no money, what with

disability. He just couldn't find no peace after he come out of the service. Get in the truck and ride the roads all day and all night and even when he was home he couldn't sleep. Walk up and down the porch all night till sunrise. Sometimes he might sleep a little bit when it got sun-up."

"He was unhappy," my father said . "We'll never feel how he felt."

"He couldn't have no peace. He left all his peace over there in the foreign lands. We don't believe our boy ever came back to us, Ginny and me."

"But you got to see him. So many of them, in their graves there, we never even got to see again."

"No," Pruitt said sharply. He made an edgy silence in the room. "We was cheated about that, him back here but not in spirit, not really with us."

"Yes, all right," my father said. "I see how you felt apart. There must have been a great many soldiers who came back like that."

"We have prayed there wouldn't be," Pruitt said. "We prayed there wouldn't be mothers and daddies that had to go through where we been."

"Yes," my father said.

—But he was thinking of Johnson Gibbs, who had been like his brother, or like his son, and buried now in our own family plot in Bright Hill Cemetery, and how that was no comfort, not in the least, simply to know where he lay after he was killed in the Army and shipped back in a box, how the telegram that told us wouldn't leave us be till it had made us crazy with visions and longing. He wished he could think about Lewis, but Lewis made him think of Johnson, and think of all the good times past and gone, and all the time left in the world that Johnson would have no share in . . .

Oh yes he does, he is beside us now even as I tell you this story.

"We felt obliged," Pruitt said. "We was just going to send word and then we talked about it and decided we better come and see you." He drew a worn bulky leather shotgun shell pouch from his jacket pocket and set it on his sharp knee, let it balance there without touching it again with his hands. "Lewis thought a lot of you," he said. "He thought you were a good sort of man and he was tickled at how you would tomfool around. He used to make us laugh like cats at the supper table, telling something you said or done."

"I see," my father said. But he didn't. He had never imagined Lewis laughing, that boy so redfaced serious.

"We didn't know what to think about that. We can't claim to much schooling, Ginny and me, and we thought maybe the schoolmaster ought to be more serious minded. But it tickled Lewis about you and we knowed he was a good boy and maybe it was all right."

Don Pobble said, "Joe Robert has a famous sense of humor."

My father gave the dry little man a warning glance, but Pruitt took no notice. "I can't hardly even read. I can read in the Bible all right, but in some other book I can't make no headway. I used to watch how Lewis would pleasure in books I couldn't make nothing of." At last he stopped searching my father's face and dropped his gaze to the pouch.

"Lewis was a good student," my father said.

"I don't know if all so many books is a great good thing. I done all right and my daddy before me, with only the Bible. But if it made Lewis proud to know the books, that would be fine with us."

"The way the world is now, we have to read the books," my father said. "We don't want them writing things about us we don't know."

The gray farmer leaned so far forward it seemed he might topple, and Ginny touched his left arm to warn him. My father could smell the odors of him now, the salt of flannel underwear and lye-washed denim, the sweetness of leaf-mulch and newly turned soil and cow. He peered from his crouched position into my father's eyes as if he were searching out something in a treetop. Then he straightened up.

It was the pain then, my father thought, that clutched his backbone and doubled him over. It'll be a miracle if that pain doesn't kill him soon. Then he realized it wouldn't. Pruitt would live with it; it would be with him in the fields at noon and in his house at midnight, but it wouldn't kill him.

"I hear tell you lost a boy in the war."

"Not my boy, no," my father said. "A young man close to me. Part of the family."

Pruitt seemed satisfied with this answer, as if my father had passed a test. For the moment his agony had exhausted itself. He thumbed open the latch of the shell pouch. The leather was dark and glossy and so old it must have belonged to his father or grandfather. He offered the pouch to my father, then changed his mind and took it back and dumped the contents into his lap. A double handful of shiny smudged ribbon and spotty brass. "They gave him all these medals," he said. "To be proud of."

"Yes," my father said. "We're supposed to be proud of them."

Then Ginny stood up. She rose quickly and decisively, smoothed down her awkward blue flowered dress and said, "Excuse me. I need

to visit the ladies'." Her manner made it clear she had planned to leave at this point; and she had not told Pruitt.

He looked at her, surprised. "Wait a minute," he said.

"No," she said. "I need to go."

Don Pobble came from behind his desk and went round and opened the door for her. "It's right down the hall," he said. "You ask Mrs. Whateley here and she'll show you."

Ginny nodded and, keeping her eyes fixed on the floor, squeezed past him at the door and went out. He closed it gently behind her.

"It's too much for her," Pruitt said. "She's a strong woman, but it's too much."

"Will she be all right?" Don Pobble asked. "Should I ask Dorothy to go with her?"

"No," Pruitt said. "She don't want no company. She just don't want to be in here right now." He gathered a handful of the medals and held them out like coins. "But we decided on this together, Ginny and me. She knows what we wanted to do."

Don Pobble sat behind the desk again. "What had you decided?"

"We wanted Mr. Kirkman here to take one of these medals if he'd have it. To remember Lewis by."

"I don't know, Pruitt," my father said. "That doesn't seem right."

"Lewis didn't take no pride in them. He stuck them in a shoebox under the bed and never took them out. Might as well of buried them. But we wanted you to have something, one of these." He hefted them, as if gauging their weight.

"It doesn't seem right," my father said. "These are things that have to be earned."

"He would do his duty, like they told him," Pruitt said. "He wouldn't do nothing just to get these."

"No, but—"

"We thought you might've wanted a remembrance." He thrust them almost directly in my father's face, a soiled and gleaming jumble of faultless honors.

My father saw, with fine relief, that Lewis' Purple Heart was not among them. He sighed a hard sigh and made himself relax. With a quick stubborn twist of his wrist he lifted one from the tangle as if he were plucking a weed from a flower bed. He stared at it in his blunt fingers, stiff little rectangle of ribbed green and red silk, striped like a Christmas candy. He had no idea what it signified, and hoped that it was nothing more than a good conduct ribbon from boot camp. He showed it to Pruitt for his approval and the farmer nodded grayly, without looking.

"I don't need this," he said, "to remember Lewis. We're all going to remember."

"That wouldn't mean so much. Strangers and all. But I'm obliged for you to take one."

"I'll be keeping it," my father said. "I'll put it somewhere."

Don Pobble spoke. "We've got some things you might want to have, Pruitt. Some pictures of Lewis in the yearbook and on the track team, and some other things."

"I've got to be going along," my father said. "I've got a classroom full of kids waiting for me. They won't know a thing till I get there."

They stood up and Pruitt shook hands with my father. "I'm mighty obliged," he said, in a voice that was not much more than a whisper. He seemed weary now, more beaten than when my father had first come in.

"Thank you for coming," my father said. "You be careful now. Take care of Ginny." But Pruitt was past answering, and my father nodded to Pobble and left and went through the other room without speaking to Dorothy and out into the dim hallway. He felt blind. The broad empty corridor with its rows of gray lockers seemed endless, full of shadows, and his footstep raised echoes that closed in on him like bricks in a wall. The sadness in him was the old familiar one he thought he was leaving behind, the terrible imagined pictures of the young men he had taught lying mangled and lifeless in alien mud. It seemed he could taste the old newsprint he had stared at during those years and hear the sad radio after supper at night. He was trying not to remember; he didn't want to think about any of that.

Among the shadows was another shadow that came toward him. It was difficult to recognize her in this light, but it was Ginny, all alone in the dark hallway. "Mr. Kirkman," she said, and he could hear the brittle determination in her voice. There was something she must say to him; she had come out here to hide in the shadows and meet him alone.

"Ginny?"

She stopped in front of him. Her head was lowered so that he looked into the part of her hair, the thin cloven vulnerable line. She was unsteady on her feet, swayed like a young willow tree. "It was something he wouldn't tell you," she said.

"About Lewis?"

"It was him that shot hisself," she said. "It was Lewis killed hisself."

"Oh Lord. God, Ginny, I'm sorry."

"It wan't nothing to do with you or this schoolhouse here," she said. "Pruitt ain't satisfied, but I'm

satisfied it was nothing to do with you or the books."

"It was the war," he said.

She nodded.

"It was the war," my father said. "And it was just like he was killed in the war. Just the same."

She made a little noise, not crying but not words.

He wanted to touch her, but he knew better. She didn't want to be touched. Lewis had done his duty, and this was her duty now to tell my father the straight of it, to make it clear. He knew, my father knew all that, but he didn't know what to do or say. It was like trying to clasp hot smoke in your arms. "I'm sorry," he said. "I thought the world of him. More than that."

She raised her small white expressionless face. "More than the world," she said. "There had ought to be more than the world."

But that wasn't what he meant. He hadn't meant anything. The world was what my father knew. He wouldn't want to imagine anything more than the world, nothing better or worse. The world was more than plenty. "I can't tell you how bad I feel," he said.

She nodded again and stepped aside now, edging into shadow, to let him pass her by. She had no more to say to him ever. He was dismissed.

He walked down the hall, feeling her presence retreat from him as she made her way back to the principal's office. Neither of them looked back. The hall shadows smoothed away the sound of their footsteps.

But he couldn't go to his classroom yet. He pushed into the faculty men's restroom and stood at the tall open window and rolled a shaky Prince Albert cigarette. It was midmorning now, a bright blue spring day, busy with robins and white butterflies in the schoolyard grass. Odd. In the hallway with Ginny he had felt that the sky was gathering to rain, but it was bright as fire outside in the other world that seemed no part of the one inside.

It can't be the books, he thought, it wasn't the books and the lessons. But when he thought about Pruitt and then Lewis his old doubts came flooding back. It was nothing but disaster, this whole century, and the schoolhouse with its foolish hopes and silly rules stood right in the middle.

How could you be sure it wasn't the fault of the books and the lessons?

He took out the medal and looked at it, tiny and weightless and tawdry, like a scrap of cellophane or tin foil a child might pick up and treasure out of the roadside weeds. He stared and then stuffed it back into his pocket with a helpless angry gesture. ❖

Fred Chappell is a prize-winning poet and author. He is Professor Emeritus at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

"Health in Appalachia" (vol. 6, no. 1)

Old Men

Abraham Verghese, M.D.

I will never forget the face of the wizened old farmer as he stood in the rural clinic. He wore only a loincloth and carried a cane. He had been waiting patiently and now, as his turn came, he saluted me by bringing his palms together and bowing gently, his eyes lowered. It was not an obsequious gesture but a dignified salute. The clinic in India was miles from any sort of sophisticated care, my armamentarium consisted of my senses for diagnosis, and a scabicidal ointment and a plentiful supply of vitamin A and sulfa tablets for treatment. My compounder squatted in the corner of the room and dispensed the medications. The room was hot and constantly full of patients who watched my every move. The belief they had in the magic of medicines made it easy to please them, but they were not interested in a specific diagnosis.

God had blessed them, the old man said. He had had 10 children, and six had lived to maturity to help him plow the land. He owned two bullocks and in the last year there had been food for all his grandchildren. But for the past 12 years he had had more trouble breathing and increasing swelling in his feet. These were not the reasons he had come to me, however, as he had learned to live with these problems. For two months now he had been having fever, shaking chills, joint pains, and blood in his urine.

I found evidence of rheumatic valvular disease involving both aortic and mitral valves. He was in congestive heart failure, and his active precordium reminded one of a percussionist seeking to escape from within the wicker basket chest. More alarming were the embolic lesions on the skin, nails and mucous membranes. Without a doubt he had endocarditis, fatal if untreated.

I told him that he would have to go to the city for treatment, and would be in the hospital for at least three weeks. His look was one a father gives a child who tells of having just fought dragons. He told me that I was being modest and that he had no doubt my ointments and tablets would do wonders. The more I pleaded, the more amused he became. He told me that years ago when the revered leader of the country had died, he journeyed to the city to homage. The sights and sounds of the city had alarmed him, and he had resolved never to lay his head down more than a stone's throw from his farm. He left with the sulfa tablets in high doses, the vitamin A tablets and the scabies ointment to apply to his chest for good measure.

Years later I saw the same wizened face and benevolent smile at a Veterans Hospital. The man lived in the domiciliary on the grounds of the hospital. He loved to garden and constantly tended the shrubs or raked leaves, stopping periodically to puff on his pipe and survey the horizon. I like to think he was admiring the Creator's handiwork. When he came into the hospital with pneumonia, he unquestioningly allowed us to perform a transtracheal needle aspiration. He seemed bemused by all our activity. My junior resident wanted to put in a central line and insert a Swan Ganz right heart catheter. I did not let all this be done, fearful of upsetting a fragile system that was in synchrony. I had heard doctors glowingly referred to as 'aggressive' and wondered whether 'aggressiveness' was determined by the patient's disease or the doctor's

mood. And were those of us who were not 'aggressive' in some way negligent? Had the existence of technology forced us to use it?

I later sat with the man on the hospital grounds. He told me that as a youth his closest companion was a 'coon' dog. He always felt that old dog knew and understood much more than anyone gave it credit for. He brought this up, he said, because of his recent hospital experience; he sensed the resident felt pity for him and the other aged patients. He had overheard one of the residents refer to the patient in the next bed as an 'old gomer'! The funny thing was that when the man in the next bed spoke, (which was rare because of his stroke,) he had expressed pity for the poor, sleepless young residents running all over the hospital. My companion said that even though he could not get around well and had little money, he felt the quality of his daily experience was superior to that of any of the young doctors. He had no fear of meeting the Maker, and he hoped that old coon dog would be up there to meet him because he now understood a lot about the way it had spent its last few years.

The two old men were worlds apart, and each got something different from medicine; one tailored the medicine to his needs, the other followed the recommended medical course. The years had given them a quiet self-respect. Old age had brought infirmities, but it had also brought courage to deal with them. Both men viewed life from a stance slightly removed from the mainstream; they were patient, tolerant, and had a realistic idea of what their bodies could and could not do. ❖

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"Sense of Place in Appalachia" (vol. 6, no. 2)

Wilma Dykeman: An Interview

Sandra L. Ballard

When I asked Wilma Dykeman to describe the way she "places" herself as a writer, I wanted to know if she would identify herself as a Tennessee writer or a North Carolinian, a novelist, a writer of non-fiction, an Appalachian writer, a Southern writer—or as something else? I should have anticipated her response. She said, "I guess I never have really liked any labels or pigeonholes." She smiled slightly as she crossed her legs and smoothed the skirt of her simple, royal blue linen dress and began a list like a litany: "I am a woman, and I live in the mountains, and I live in the South, and I am an American." She went on to say that whether we attach labels according to these qualities or others—like social class, economics, or religion—the labels all tend to "limit and deemphasize the central thing—which is that you're just writing and you want to try to communicate your own special vision."

Dykeman's dissatisfaction with labels is one of the reasons she tried different forms of writing. When I had arranged to meet her at the University of Tennessee library, I knew that in this building there were 16 books she had written in addition to a number of books for which she had contributed a chapter or an article.

Her credits include three novels all set in Appalachia—*The Tall Woman* in 1962, *The Far Family* in 1966 and *Return the Innocent Earth* in 1973—and a great deal of non-fiction. She has written a volume on a river, *The French Broad* in 1955, on history, *With Fire and Sword: The Battle of Kings Mountain* and *Tennessee: A Bicentennial History* in 1975, as well as other books about the state and the Appalachian region and two collections of essays.

With her husband, James Stokely, she co-authored *Neither Black Nor White* in 1957, which she describes as "an interpretation of the South before every other person had done one." It was a book for which they conducted over 500 interviews across the South. In 1958 it won the Hillman Award for the best book on world peace, race relations or civil liberties.

Later she wrote the biographies of two Southern statesmen who were involved with race relations: *Seeds of Southern Change: The Life of Will Alexander,* which she wrote with her husband in 1962, and *Prophet of Plenty: The First Ninety Years of W.D. Weatherford* in 1966.

She also wrote the biography *Too Many People, Too Little Love: A Biography of Edna Rankin McKinnon* in 1974, about the advocate of birth control and family planning who came to Tennessee with Margaret Sanger in the 1930s.

Wilma Dykeman declared every time she wrote a biography that she would never do another one. But in each case, she explained, "these were people who made me think, if I don't write about their lives they probably won't have a biography, at least not now. Each one of them really did have such a special contribution, and I guess my sense of mission has always been strong."

Her mission carries her into the classroom where she teaches a course in Appalachian Studies at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. These courses began when Dr. John Fisher was the head of the English Department, between 1976 and 1978. She had realized that the largest university in the region did not then have a single course that related to the region: "Now, I don't think it's regionalism," she said, "to know the place where you are. The arts have always, historically, had a great sense of place."

When Dykeman talked with Fisher about several good writers in this region, writers that he did not know, he asked her if she would initiate a course in Appalachian literature. Her first response was to tell him that she didn't have a Ph.D. "Then the next thing I said was I would do it until he found somebody else." That was about 13 years ago.

Knowing the aversion she had expressed to such labels as "Appalachian writer," I asked how she defined "Appalachian literature" for her classes. She laughed, recognizing the contradiction between the language she uses to describe her personal stance and that required in her role as a teacher, and told me her definition: "that which has been written in Appalachia or about Appalachia, or by people who have lived or still live in Appalachia. You don't have to have lived here all your life, and you don't have to have written just about it [the region]. It's anything in the context of Appalachia."

When I asked about the writers she includes in the course, she began by explaining her view of the two traditions out of which Appalachian literature emerged.

She called one "the Sut Lovingood tradition of old Southwestern humor," which began in the 1850s when Knoxville writer George Washington Harris created the uncouth character of Sut Lovingood, a Tennessee mountaineer whose dialect, tall tales and earthy humor have contributed to one stereotype of mountain people. (Sut Lovingood's yams also influenced the development of such characters as Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn.)

Dykeman called the other tradition the "parlor" school of Mary Noailles Murfree, a native of Murfreesboro, Tenn., who published fiction from the 1880s until 1914 under the pseudonym of Charles Egbert Craddock. Her novels, full of romantic descriptions of the Cumberland and Smoky Mountains and detailed records of mountaineers' odd customs and peculiar speech, contributed to the "local color" tradition, depicting a quaint mountain people. Dykeman believes "these two stereotypes have greatly influenced Appalachian literature. You get John Fox (whose most well known novels are *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* in 1903 and *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* in 1908) after Mary Murfree, and you begin to get some of the Daisy Mae (characters) after Sut Lovingood. The rest of us are sort of caught between these two stereotypes. But it's interesting to follow them down to the present day."

Of the early writers from the region, Dykeman said, "I am a great admirer" of Emma Bell Miles' *The Spirit of the Mountains* of 1905. "She had very fresh insights that are just as meaningful today as they were at the time she wrote them." And Horace Kephart's *Our Southern Highlanders* of 1913 and 1922 is a classic study that Dykeman likes because of the perspective of "the outsider who comes in and interprets the region."

She mentioned Jesse Stuart, commenting, "I think Jesse Stuart's great contribution was his short stories . . . of all the thousands of things he wrote."

About James Still, Dykeman remarked, "for years I went around talking about him," recognizing that "there were just very few that knew about his work." Her students often read his novel *River of Earth* and his short stories because they "have really universal themes."

"Then there's Harriette Arnow, of course." She asked my response to *The Weedkiller's Daughter*, Arnow's fourth novel, published in 1970. It was set in Detroit during the 1960s and examined such problems as McCarthyism, the Vietnam War, environmental pollution and civil rights. The novel had received neither the critical nor popular success of Arnow's earlier work, Dykeman believed, because readers had expected another novel set in Kentucky. "It was terrible what happened to her with it. I didn't feel that it should be dismissed at all. (But) too many people felt, 'She has to write another *Dollmaker*,' or, 'She has to write another *Hunter's Horn*.' How unfair of them to put a corset on her this way!"

Dykeman spoke with conviction, blue eyes flashing. She said that readers and critics refused to allow Arnow "to move beyond (her earlier novels) and write about what was happening to people all around her in another place. See, that's why I hate those labels. If she'd been John Updike—he can go to France and then write about France, and people don't say, 'Oh, he isn't writing about the suburbs.' If you've lived in the suburbs of New York, apparently you can be universal enough that you can write about anything."

Dykeman also includes work by Thomas Wolfe and James Agee in her Appalachian literature courses. "It's interesting how in temperament and in their own self-destruction, they are so much alike—and both so much a part of the Appalachian experience in literature, and yet unlike all these other Appalachian writers. But they are very much like each other."

Tennessean Mildred Haun's *The Hawk' s Done Gone* of 1941 is another book that Dykeman discusses with her classes. She and her husband had not heard of Haun when they received her book for a wedding present. "It was published the year we were married."

Set in Cocke County where Dykeman has a home, Haun's fiction "looks at the dark side of the moon," Dykeman said. She singled out Haun's use of "the witchcraft and the traditions and the mythology" as "very skillful, very artistic," believing that Haun

"really gives that part of it in a way that I think no other writer has. Some of her short stories that are in the larger collection (published by Vanderbilt in 1968) are really horrifying." She added, "It's the oppression of women in her books that's a theme that's really been overlooked." She expressed her desire for somebody to examine this neglected aspect of some of the literature of the region.

With the mention of the "dark side" of literature and life, I wondered about Dykeman's opinion of East Tennessee novelist Cormac McCarthy. She began, "of course, his fiction is so entirely different from mine—and his whole vision." She admits, however, that she admires his "magic with words," his humor, and his imaginative expression of his personal vision. She believes that "his really dark vision of life is one that balances some of the brighter and more optimistic viewpoints.

"What interests me," she commented, "is the response of some people who see that (dark view) as being more authentic, somehow more vital than another kind of vision that is more affirmative. It seems to me that what literature is all about is to have a number of different views."' Dykeman is quick to admit that she recognizes the "dark" elements of life, and she says she welcomes the revelations she can have about them through reading such novels as McCarthy's *Suttree*. She has no objections to McCarthy's fiction. What she objects to is the acceptance of only that dark view of life as being the authentic Southern view.

Much of the graphic violence and exaggerated behavior in Southern fiction, she believes, "grows out of real editorial encouragement to write in this way. The 'Joyce Carol Oates syndrome,' I guess you would call it" results in "book after book after book" featuring experiences that are "not mainstream." Dykeman readily accepts that "we have anguish. We all have anguish—and really dark moments. But, to me, the challenge is to capture those moments that do happen to most people rather than these bizarre ones. The thing that literature needs to do is to let us really share whatever that experience is and relate to it because then we bring something into our own lives from the literature." Dykeman stated with quiet exasperation, "There aren't too many of us who eat the afterbirth of one of our children" (referring to a scene in Oates' work).

In her Appalachian literature classes, she includes a wide range of contemporary writers from the region. In addition to McCarthy, she discusses the works of Lee Smith, Bobbie Ann Mason, Jayne Anne Phillips and Gail Godwin. She added, "You know, (Godwin's) last three novels are set in Asheville." She referred to Nikki Giovanni: "She grew up in Knoxville and some of her poems are about when she lived here."

Fred Chappell is another writer that she thinks "is very, very good." His *Dagon* and *I Am One of You Forever* "seem like two different worlds. He doesn't get just in one mode or one way of reacting to life." Likewise, poet Jim Wayne Miller, she reminded me, "has a novel coming out now."

When I asked about writers of this region who are not getting the attention she would like to see them get, Dykeman shifted in her chair, leaned toward me, and eagerly began with John Ehle. "The *Washington Post* had an excellent review of his novel just before this last one, *The Winter People*, but when you read long essays on Southern literature, he's never mentioned. He's just one of the underestimated writers of the region."

She next thought of Wendell Berry, a writer of poetry, essays, and novels. She described him as an articulate spokesman for the region, with deep "Appalachian concerns," mentioning his work *The Unsettling of America*. "A lot of people know about him," she said, "but he's not nearly recognized as much as he should be.

"Another one that I've been reading is this new young writer Denise Giardina. Do you know her novel *Storming Heaven*? *Now and Then* had a long review of it" (Vol. 5, No. 1, Spring 1988).

Turning to poets, Dykeman thought of Byron Herbert Reece, a Georgian "who follows in the oldest tradition, the ballad tradition. He's the only person I know who, by himself, wrote a ballad as if it had been written by a whole community—which is the way a ballad is supposed to be written." His first book *Ballad of the Bones*, Dykeman said, is "a link between the past and the present in Appalachian poetry."

Dykeman is currently working on a book about Sequoyah, the half-Cherokee inventor of the written Cherokee language. She thinks of him as more than "just a genius." She also revealed that the subject of her "night work and day thinking" is a long novel about which she offered no further details.

As we stood to leave, Dykeman recalled when Bobbie Ann Mason was in Knoxville recently. A headline about Mason's visit had read, "To know your place you

have to leave it," and Dykeman understands that sentiment. But she wouldn't want to move to New York.

She believes that she has seen enough of the world to have a sense of perspective about the region where she lives.

More disheartening than the New York editors who don't understand why she still lives here, she sighed, are the people *here* who don't understand why she hasn't left. She has traveled widely, she explained, and she finds that one of the most exciting things that can happen is to be in a foreign place and "all of a sudden to have an incredible sense of *deja vu*." To recognize the familiar in the unfamiliar—to understand that universal experience is not limited to a particular region—that is what gives us a genuine sense of place. ❖

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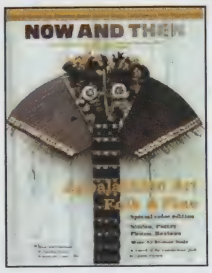

"Appalachian Art Folk & Fine" (vol. 6, no. 3)

The Cherokee:
Hungry for the Dance

Jane Harris Woodside

The girls wear long full skirts banded with ribbon. The boys are attired in jeans and open necked shirts with two ribbons fluttering from their chests. They all circle counterclockwise. To the accompaniment of a drum and a gourd rattle, the Cherokee youngsters do a quick shuffle, then bend over and sway. The dance leader's occasional growls elicit answering growls from the ensemble. From time to time, the boys and girls tum to each other and claw at the air. Using simple but evocative steps, they all do their best imitation of a bear.

The Cherokee have been caught between two worlds for a very long time now. In the early 19th century, as whites became more and more intent on acquiring the Cherokee's homeland in and around the Appalachian mountains, some Cherokee coped by adopting the more centralized, organized ways of the European-Americans, hoping to head off subjugation with assimilation. But some traditionalists resisted, clinging to their ancient way of life, a culture based upon subsistence agriculture supplemented with hunting and fishing. The Cherokee carried out this way of life in a loose federation of villages organized by clan and operating on values that emphasized harmony over competition, respectful coexistence with nature over attempts at mastery.

Of the small number of North Carolina Cherokee who managed to avoid being forcibly transplanted to Oklahoma by the Federal government in the 1830s, most were traditionalists. The early 20th century brought these traditionalists face to face with white culture, intensifying their exposure to an alien way of life, an exposure already well underway through the influence of missionaries and the introduction of federally-run schools in the 19th century. Depression programs paved the way for processed food, manufactured clothing and other products to enter the Cherokees' lives.

The development of the Great Smoky Mountain National Park and the Blue Ridge Parkway in the 1930s attracted tourists from all over the country. An often bizarre tourist industry took root early and still flourishes (although the recently established Museum of the Cherokee Indian and the Oconaluftee Village do their best to present Cherokee history accurately). Various businesses, often white-owned, offer visitors the chance to have their picture taken with Cherokee dressed in Plains Indian garb or to spend their money on attractions promising Christmas in July or "educated"' performing bears. A few light industries arrived in the 1950s. All the while, traditions associated with a culture based on subsistence agriculture crumbled as the Native Americans left their farms for outside employment.

Dance is one of the ways that some Cherokee are employing to maintain—or in some cases, to regain—a hold on their ancient way of life. Walker Calhoun, a 71-year-old retired factory worker from the Big Cove community, is the individual most responsible for the current revival of traditional Cherokee dance. In addition to chanting and instructing several dance troops, he leads his own group, the Raven Rock Dancers, mostly made up of his own grandchildren.

Calhoun's community of Big Cove is one of the most traditional on the Qnalla Boundary reservation. Located 14 miles up into the mountains from Cherokee, N.C., Big Cove is where the Park and the Blue Ridge Parkway meet. Still, it is isolated enough to have escaped the brunt of the tourist industry (although one campground is marked by a larger-than-life-sized statue of Yogi Bear standing in a thicket of rhododendron by a fast-running stream).

Will West Long, Calhoun's half-uncle, inspired Calhoun with a love of dance in his youth. After a hiatus of about 30 years, Calhoun has once again become involved in teaching traditional Cherokee dance. "I just want to

show these young people what we used to do," says Calhoun, whose first language is Cherokee. "A lot of them are just hungry for the dances."

Among those hungry for the dance is Gilliam Jackson, the 37-year-old Executive Director of the Cherokee Center for Family Services in Cherokee and a native of Snowbird, another traditional Native American community located about 60 miles from Cherokee in mountainous Graham County. Jackson earned first an education degree from the University of Georgia and later, after teaching and then working in a social service agency, a masters in social work from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

Back in the early 1980s, he and some friends began to retrieve the Cherokee heritage that was rapidly slipping through their fingers. "There's a vacuum when you don't have these things," he says. "I grew up speaking Cherokee, I grew up learning a lot about non-materialistic traditional values and some of the old ways and some of the old practices. But there's still a lot of vacuum, a lot of void that needs to be filled in."

When you ask European-American traditional dancers in this region why they dance, dancers who do old-time square dancing, clogging, flatfooting or buck dancing, they will tell you about good exercise and good company. When you ask Jackson or Calhoun why Cherokee dance, they speak of a world view and a belief system.

According to the Stone Man myth, the myth most often told to account for the dance's creation, dance begins with song, magical and powerful. Calhoun, who is a master of the rhythmic and forceful chants which accompany dance, explains that when he compared notes with Cherokee dancers on a recent trip to eastern Oklahoma, he realized that "this singing. it's a spiritual thing. They said we can't, we don't understand it. Most of this I say when I'm singing, it don't mean nothing to me. God knows what you sing, but we don't know. Was a gift to them many years ago, nobody knows when, these songs."

The Stone Man is an armor-plated creature who feeds on human livers. Capable of metamorphosis, he lives among the Cherokee.as an orphan boy in order to prey upon their children. After several deaths, members of the tribe pinpoint the boy as the murderer, but they proceed cautiously, mindful of the power they are combating. Finally, they devise a plan to weaken and destroy the Stone Man by placing seven menstruating women in his path.

The plan works. But at this point, the fatally weakened Stone Man becomes a very complex figure. For the creature who brought evil and destruction to the tribe is the very same creature who brings salvation by his sacrificial death. Stone Man instructs the Cherokee to burn his body, and as his body is consumed by the flames, they will hear songs which will aid them in all aspects of life, songs for dances which they must learn and teach to their children. Song and dance, then, were seen as a means of survival. They were a way of both acknowledging and manipulating human beings' intimate connections with both the human and natural worlds. People's actions, especially their dance, affected those worlds in very concrete and immediate ways.

Reflecting their subsistence agricultural base, the Cherokee year was divided into two seasons, winter and summer. Certain dances, such as the Green Corn dance, were performed only in summer since they were associated with crops and vegetation. Winter dances, such as the Eagle and the Bear, were believed to attract cold and death. To perform a dance in other than its appropriate season was to upset the balance and invite catastrophe.

Dressed in skins and wooden masks, hunters performed special hunting dances which mimicked the animals they would soon stalk: the deer, the bear, the turkey and the eagle. Such dances were a way of asking the animals to allow the Cherokee to survive by sacrificing themselves. Explains the younger Jackson, "Our belief system held that all the animals were in the spirit world just as we are, and that we needed to give thanks in order to continue receiving the things they gave to us. They were a dance of thanksgiving."

The Cherokee gave their social life expression through the War and Peace Pipe dances, through Victory and Friendship dances. They tried to cope with the intrusion of outsiders through a fascinating form that straddled dance and drama, the Booger dance. Originally, the Native Americans performed the Booger dance as a way of driving away illness and death by ridiculing the witches that brought them. Later, outsiders—whites, blacks and alien Indian tribes—took the place of witches as the carriers of evil. In both cases, the strategy was the same: the Cherokee could deal with a seemingly overwhelming enemy if that enemy were reduced to manageable proportions through ridicule.

In the Booger dance, the audience, gathered together in a house, sand special songs as the band of Boogers outfitted themselves in special disguises, complete with masks made out of buckeye. Eventually, the menacing Boogers entered the house and took

their places on a bench along the wall. A leader of the Booger band and the host of the house party acted as intermediaries between the evil ones and the community. No booger spoke above a whisper since the actors' identities were to remain a secret.

After hushed conversations between the Boogers leader and the host, the audience was informed that the newcomers were Boogers. Next, as percussive music began, each individual character's name was announced, names ranging from the simply descriptive, such as Chinaman or Northerner, to more graphic ones such as Rusty Anus. Each Booger stepped forward to perform a ludicrous solo dance. Finally, the audience requested a specific group dance such as the Bear or Eagle, dances which often incorporated the invader's sexual advances on Cherokee women dancers, and the whole troupe of Boogers performed.

The dance master Walker Calhoun remembers the older form of Booger dance, which was designed to banish witches, being performed when he was in his teens. That was back in the time life was centered on the rural settlement itself. "We didn't go anywhere. We just lived around here." Calhoun, who still lives on his family's homeplace, recalls when the fields along the steep gravel drive leading up to his house were planted in com, not in the especially tidy rows of Christmas trees as they are now.

The family's 10 children helped their parents provide for most of their own needs, only walking along the dusty road into Cherokee for sugar, coffee, salt and whiskey or sending for such items by the man who drove a wagon and a yoke of steer 35 miles to a Whittier, N.C., train depot. "All the young people, there was nothing much to do but help raise food, and sometimes they'd build a house, a log house. Keep busy. Clear the land, raise corn. That was away of life."

In his youth dance was still an important and natural part of community life, a respite from the constant demands of farm work. There were special ceremonial dances, such as the Green Corn Dance, which took place on a now overgrown ball field by the Raven's Fork River in August, to celebrate a good harvest. "Women folks cooked the corn, beans, taters, whatever they had, they cooked it, took it down to the ball field, and they called it Dinner on the Grounds," Calhoun says. "And while we was waiting to eat, that's when they done this Green Corn Dance, around this food."

Twice a month, the community gathered for social dances at his aunt's house. The host would appoint a driver, a sort of master of ceremonies who announced the dances, maintained order, prodded people to participate and made sure that each man had the opportunity to lead a dance. The dance would last all night long.

One of the individuals who helped keep traditional dance alive in Big Cove, who in fact was an important force in fostering community cohesiveness and traditional values in general, was Will West Long. In spite of his education, Long remained on the reservation and farmed. "He chose to live just like the rest of us," notes Calhoun with approval. He organized the community's free labor group, was a traditional healer and frequently exhorted community members to love one another. "He was a good man all the way around."

And he often hosted community dances. "Will West had a yard where we used to dance. He used to start about this time of the year, the late summer, to practice his dances. People who lived way down this side of Cherokee, they'd have to walk to come to dance and walk back home. That's how interested they were. A lot of people used to go there and practice dance." Long's expertise and love of dance led him to collaborate with two ethnologists, Frank G. Speck and Leonard Broom, in their 1951 book *Cherokee Dance and Drama*, a book whose publication he did not live to see.

With Long's passing in 1946 at age 77, the dance tradition in Big Cove faded. His nephew Walker Calhoun did not participate in dance again until 1984 when a group of young dancers needed a driver to perform at the Joint Council of the Cherokee Nation, the first meeting of the Western and Eastern bands of the Cherokee in Red Clay, Tenn. Calhoun's reputation as a fine singer of dance songs and an expert dancer spread, and soon other groups such as Gilliam Jackson's were enlisting his aid. Eventually, he organized some of his 24 grandchildren into the Raven Rock Dancers, named after the outcrop above his home.

But the survival of Cherokee traditional dance is not assured. Although dancers do sporadically get together on the reservation, most of the dancing in which Calhoun is involved takes place at festivals such as Western Carolina University's Mountain Heritage Days or at the Southern Dance Traditions Conference sponsored by the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services and the Tennessee Humanities Council. Calhoun would like to see regular dances in Cherokee communities themselves. "If I had a room, if I had a place where different communities all over the reservation

could come, I'd invite them. I'd have a big crowd of dancers. I was wanting to borrow Cherokee's Civic Center or the all-purpose building on the festival ground. I ask them one time if I could use the place for a dance, and I never hear anything about it."

An even more serious problem than the lack of a site is how to make the dances—and the values they embody—relevant to young people. "I don't think our kids that we're teaching nowadays are necessarily understand the values behind the dance, but in time they do," says Calhoun's student, Jackson, speaking of the animal dances. "Still, we're not using these animals the way we used to. They're not a necessity any more. Maybe it's also time to begin teaching or learning new dances where we continue the tradition of giving thanks, but not necessarily to the beaver or the bear."

Cherokee dance will continue if it manages to walk this tightrope successfully, to maintain that underlying tradition of thanksgiving in new forms. It has a new mission now, a different function than in days past. No longer do dancers put on animal skins in imitation of the animals they are honoring. They all wear clothes decorated in ribbon, a tradition that dates back to the Long Walk of 1972, a cross-country march by the Cherokee and other Indian tribes calling for an extensive overhaul of the treaty process between the United States government and Native Americans. Dance is no longer called upon simply to express the values and philosophy of an ancient and stable way of life. It now must help its participants maintain a sense of identity as Cherokee in particular and as Native Americans in general in a rapidly changing environment where forces for assimilation are powerful and often overwhelming.

The younger Jackson, father of a 14-year-old daughter, puts this struggle in personal terms. "I'm trying to get my daughter to appreciate what we have. And also, like Walker here, I try to maintain it as long as we can.

It's possible both to assimilate and to keep some of the traditions. We have a lot of families who are very traditional but who are also very progressive and can interchange between the old world and the new world.

But probably the biggest portion of our families in Cherokee today are non-traditional. We're assimilating pretty fast. We're losing, I guess."

But the social worker is not without hope that dance can help preserve the Cherokee's distinct identity. "Any time we are in a dance group, it signifies working together, a whole lot of unity. Because everyone's dancing together. It's all peaceful, it's a lot of joy and a lot of fun too."

Even more promising is the fact that two of Walker Calhoun's grandchildren, 10-year old cousins Tim and Andrea, clearly love to dance. They eagerly volunteer to demonstrate a dance to a visitor. Swaying from side to side and holding a sourwood wand of eagle feathers aloft, they dance with great dignity and great absorption. ❖

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"Rural Appalachia"
(vol. 7, no. 1)

Maxine Waller:
The Making of a Community Organizer

Helen Matthews Lewis

Ivanhoe is a small rural mountain community on the New River at the far end of the two counties of Wythe and Carroll in Southwest Virginia. As the poorest community in the area, its problems are ignored by both counties.

From the mid-1800s Ivanhoe was a booming iron ore center with lead, zinc and manganese mining. National Carbide and New Jersey Zinc, two of the largest industries in Southwest Virginia, provided the economic base of the area. At its height, Ivanhoe counted 4,500 residents and boasted a school, a railroad, a hotel, stores, a theater, a doctor and a restaurant. But in 1966 National Carbide closed, taking 450 jobs with it, and in 1981 New Jersey Zinc followed suit, with a loss of 350 jobs.

Now Ivanhoe has about 1,300 residents, and the school, stores, theater and railroad are all gone. Employment opportunities in Ivanhoe are very limited. Those who found other jobs after the factories and mines closed commute an average of 63 miles to work, and most had to accept lower pay and fewer benefits.

Maxine Waller, an Ivanhoe resident since 1971, has emerged as a leader in the struggle to improve economic conditions in her community. In this interview she tells the story of how she came to understand that she and the other residents of Ivanhoe must take responsibility for the community's livelihood.

I was born in over near Max Meadows in a little community called Locust Hill. It was an iron ore camp. It's a nonexistent community now. It's all been destroyed. All the land has been sold, and all the houses were torn down.

Daddy worked for a garment mill, Burlington Mills for 40-some years. Mother did anything that needed to be done. All of her life she worked in the factories. She worked at the shirt factory in Wytheville. She was a wonderful seamstress, but the wanted young bodies. She had to go to work for the laundry in Wytheville, and in the early 70s, she retired and wasn't bringing home but 30 dollars a week.

Daddy worked evening shift all my life. Mama always worked day shift. When I was little, I would sit home with my daddy 'til he got ready to go to work, and then I would go to a neighbor's house and stay there 'til my mama come. She paid them to keep me. It seemed like it was days that I didn't get to go home.

I went to Max Meadows Elementary School. Then I went to Fort Chiswell High School, and I quit back in 60-something. I left home and worked and met a lot of people, looked at life a little differently and grew and learned a lot. I decided never to come back to the Appalachian mountains as long as I lived, 'cause the only thing they had was a lot of bitter memories.

I came back to visit Mother—she was sick—and I met my husband, M.H. I met him in Wytheville at a party. I was kind of afraid of him 'cause he said he was from Ivanhoe. I heard that Ivanhoe was worse than Locust Hill, and I didn't think you could get much worse than Locust Hill. He asked me if I would go out with him. He told me he was going to take me to the theater. We got over in Ivanhoe and we parked on the side of the road. It was down in town. We were just sitting there listening to Christmas music on the radio. Every little bit, somebody would pull up beside the car, and he would roll down the window and have a conversation.

I finally asked, "Didn't you tell me you were taking me to the theater?" "I already have," he replied. "Then where in the hell is it?" "Right there," he said pointing out the window. All I could see was a bunch of weeds and beer cans. "It burned down 15 or 20 years ago," he said. "Then what are we doing here?" And he said, "Well, I sit down here at the theater and talk to people every night." So I found out what a date with him was right fast: sitting in Ivanhoe and talking to people.

He looked over at me and said, "I hope you realize that I'm always to live in Ivanhoe." He took me over to the Carbide plant, and I got Carbide dust on my shoes.

We started going out, and within two weeks' time I was in love. That's how I got to Ivanhoe. I ain't never regretted. I ain't never looked back. Through loving him I have learned to see all the things he sees, and I've learned to love it, too.

I moved to Ivanhoe in 1971. Carbide left in '66, but the mines was there, and M.H. worked in the mines. The population wasn't any bigger than it is now, but there were more stores here.

M.H. came home one day and said the mines were closing. That was about the horrible year in our lives, about the worst thing we've ever been through. He didn't have a job, and I had to have some medical help, and we didn't have no insurance.

Everybody said it was a recession. I saw it as a time that they broke one of the strongest unions in the world. We could have moved to Tennessee. M.H. said, "I'll dig ditches before I leave. This is my home." Then he got a job digging ditches for $3.35 an hour. That was the worst time he had ever been through.

Now M.H. goes to work at (the) Radford (Arsenal). He still doesn't like the job. He drives 45 miles one way to work and 45 miles back, and then he is always tired from his long drive. It takes 12 hours to pull eight.

About May of 1986 he had bought on old blue '64 Ford. That was the ugliest old blue car. He thinks it's beautiful. It sat there for about two years, and men were always stopping asking if we were going to sell it. That made me mad. We had built him a garage behind the house, and I had tried to fix a place to put that old car, but there was this big old rock sticking up there. I hired a bulldozer to move that rock, and he couldn't move it. I got a man with a backhoe. It almost tore his backhoe up.

So, there's this old rock stuck in my way, and this old blue car in front of my house. That Saturday evening I was out there standing beside that old rock, and this little boy came along, and he asked me what I was doing. I said, "I wanted to put the car in here, but that rock's in my way. You can't move this rock. Rocks is forever." He said, "Max, you just like everybody else in Ivanhoe—you don't think you can do nothing, and I hate this damn place!"

I thought, "Lord, what is this kid saying? He is only 14, and he hates this damn place?" All M.H. had ever talked about was how much he loved it, and all the people that I have talked to say how much they love it, but here is this little kid that lives here that says he hates it.

I said, "What can I do about it?" He said, "Well, why don't you break it?" I said, "You can't break a rock." He said, "We can take a hammer and break that rock."

So I just stepped in the garage and got him a hammer, and I got me a hammer, and we started beating on that rock. Along came another little boy, and he was just 14 too. He said, "You've gone crazy. You're just like everyone else in Ivanhoe. I hate this place."

I handed him a hammer, and I got out another hammer. Michael, our son, came out of the house and asked what we were doing. "Beating this old rock," I said. When he said, "I hate Ivanhoe," I knew the Lord was telling me something. So I gave him hammer too.

So we went to beating on this rock, me and the sons of former hardrock miners beating out our anger and frustration on a hard rock. We beat on that rock all summer long: 21 boys and one little girl, my daughter. It wasn't breaking. It was just chipping away. The kids ate with us every meal, and some days we would go through three pounds of bologna and three gallons of milk. Come the end of summer, nobody had broken the rock; but we had a driveway full of gravel.

When it was time for the kids to go back to school, I picked up the newspaper, the *Roanoke Times*, and right beside of the obituary column it said, "Property in Ivanhoe to be sold; money to be taken into Wytheville and Hillsville to build factories to employ people, to put it in their industrial parks."

I knew that Wytheville alone had spent $400,000 on their industrial park. They were going to sell this little piece of land here in Ivanhoe that I maybe could have used for a playground for the kids, or we need for jobs. I decided they might sell this piece of property, but I was going to go over there and tell the Board of Supervisors what I thought of them, that I was paying them to work for me, and that they was selling something that we needed.

I heard that there was a meeting going to be down at Odd Fellows Hall about 15 minutes before it happened. I grabbed M.H., and I said, "Come on, we got to go down there!" There were 57 people there. Everybody signed a petition and said they would come to the Board of Supervisors' meeting the next morning.

I got to the meeting, and George L. was sitting there, and he was the only person. He looked at me and said, "Where the hell is everybody?" He said, "You make

a speech, and I'll go on home, and I'll meet you in Ivanhoe." I said, "I'll tell you one thing—if I make a speech, you're going to set here and listen to me."

I hadn't never made a speech in my life. I didn't know what to do. They said, "Is there anybody got anything to say?" I thought, "I might go down, and I might go to jail, and they might do a lot of things to us in Ivanhoe, but at least I'm going to say something before they do it." So I got up, and I told them everything I wanted to say. I told them I felt really bad having to tell my government that they was doing a bad job—but they were doing a bad job. Then I invited them to Ivanhoe and told them we were having another town meeting and I wanted them to come. So I went back to Ivanhoe and called a town meeting.

I called the sheriff and told him we were going to have a protest march. There was four or five mamas that got behind the kids that helped pull this together. We got all this poster paper, and we made signs. One little boy's sign said, "Give us a factory or give us back our taxes." "IVANHOE FOREVER" was another. I told the kids when they stopped out in the street that evening, "I make you a promise. They ain't nobody else going to do nothing else to you as long as I live." Both my children were in that march. There was about 30 kids, and they marched down that street, and they were chanting, "Don't sell us out." The newspaper was there. We marched into the Odd Fellows building, and the kids went and sat down. I asked a friend of mine that worked at the bank if she would take some notes, 'cause the politicians were coming. I told her to write down if they promised us something. We had 150 people at that meeting.

This friend of mine asked me if I would be president (of the newly-forming Ivanhoe Civic League). I said, "No. It would take a man to be president, or somebody with an education." He said, "Max, I think you should be president." There sat all those kids, and I knew every one of them, and they was just looking at me. I said, "If people will let me, I will do the best that I can do." I did it because I realized right then that I was the only person in that room that knew every one of the children by name and knew most of their problems. They asked for nominations for president, and there wasn't nobody nominated but me. I was unanimously elected. Since that time, I have done to the best of my ability whatever I felt was right for us as a community.

It's been the greatest thing that ever was. We've had change. People that have stayed home most of their lives and never participated in anything are out doing community things now. We're going to renovate the houses. Any time that a nickel is spent in Ivanhoe that wasn't never spent here before, it is an improvement. I can see a great change in Ivanhoe. I see the kids participating in and doing things. To me Ivanhoe is a far better place than it was for the simple reason there has been a lot of people's lives changed because of the Ivanhoe Civic League. It has created friendships that will be forever. It has created happiness. We have brought about social change.

It ain't enough. We've got to keep on moving.

In the first month of its existence the Ivanhoe Civic League stopped the sale of the Ivanhoe Industrial Park. The Industrial Development Authorities agreed to delay the sale for two years to give the community a chance to recruit industry to the park. Ivanhoe citizens began a year-long campaign to revitalize the dying town. Their creative efforts included an emotional publicity fund-raising event, "Hands Across Ivanhoe," in which 3,000 people paid $3.00 to stand in the cold rain to clasp hands in support of Ivanhoe.

The following summer, community volunteers cleared land on a portion of the industrial park near the river and named it Jubilee Park. They held a week-long Fourth of July celebration which was part fund raiser, part community mobilization effort, and part celebration of their renewed spirit and determination.

Through the county and state the community has succeeded in gaining funds for a shell building on the industrial part for a factory. For the time being, the Industrial Development Authorities are not trying to sell the land.

Two business ventures, a machine shop and a sewing factory, have attempted operations, but were defeated by undercapitalization.

As it has become more and more obvious that recruiting an industry for this small, rural community is a difficult, if not impossible goal, the Civic League suggested that Jubilee Park become a community-owned enterprise. A tourist industry with bike rental, camping, rafting and a convenience store would provide jobs and recreation for the community. The net income would support further economic development.

But the two counties' Industrial Development Authorities would not define Jubilee Park as an industry, and they would not allow them to lease or buy the land, even though

it was largely on the flood plain and had been considered worthless and expendable several months earlier.

Ironically, the frustrating encounters with the local governments and Industrial Development Authorities renewed the Civic League's determination and lent support to their conviction that if anything was going to happen in Ivanhoe, the people would make it happen.

In the fall of 1987 the citizens of Ivanhoe organized classes for the community to explore economic possibilities. Several people, including myself, were invited to develop the economics classes (which I renamed "economic discussions").

As the discussions proceeded, members of the community began to reconsider their goals. They conducted a community survey, and in this process, they changed their focus from chasing smokestacks to looking to smaller local development based on their own needs and resources.

They first organized a senior citizens' program and a youth recreation program. Then, after remodeling an old store building in the center of town, they created a range of programs, from youth tutoring to college classes.

The Civic League developed jobs for six to 10 people with VISTA and other government-sponsored programs, making the League the town's largest employer.

The League also purchased a large house in the town center next door to the Education Center. It houses their offices, classrooms and living spaces for the college student volunteers who help refurbish homes.

The community has also developed the Ivanhoe History Project, a major effort for two and a half years. I remained in the community to help with the project. From the 58 oral histories and 800 photographs, they have produced two volumes of Ivanhoe history. In addition they developed a play, It Came From Within, *performed at Jubilee 1989. The Virginia Foundation for Humanities and Public Policy and the Virginia Arts Council helped fund the project.*

Telling their stories, remembering and recording the stories and reflecting on that history made it possible for members of the community not only to preserve their history but to learn from it and plan together their future development.

Maxine Waller, the energetic leader of the group, recently earned her GED diploma through the community program. She directed the theater project. ❖

This interview first appeared in *IVANHOE, VIRGINIA: Remembering Our Past—Building Our Future*, a two-volume community and oral history of Ivanhoe, from the Ivanhoe Civic League.

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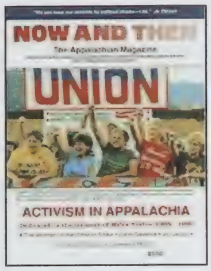


"Activism in Appalachia" (vol. 7, no. 3)

Ten Months that Shook the Coalfields:

Women's Stories from the Pittston Strike

Marat Moore

We will all go to glory together or we will go down together. We must stand together; if we don't, there will be no victory for any of us.

-Mother Jones

If activists are born of struggle, no spot in Appalachia was more fertile last year than the coal counties of Southwest Virginia, where mining families waged a 10-month strike against the Connecticut-based Pittston Company.

The Pittston strike will stand as one of the most important labor disputes of the 1980s. For the United Mine Workers of America, the issues of job security and health benefits for active and retired workers were key to future national negotiations—and, in an era of union-busting, perhaps even to the union's survival.

On the line for Pittston miners were around 3,000 union jobs in Virginia, West Virginia and Kentucky. The numbers affected were actually much greater. They included laid-off workers, pensioners and families—more than 25,000 Appalachians.

The strike broke new ground on many fronts. It triggered labor's first widespread use of civil disobedience since the 1930s and an outpouring of solidarity unseen in the last decade. Court fines of more than $64 million, the largest in American history, were levied against the UMWA. Within the union, the strike generated the first UMWA student auxiliaries, an expansion of women's involvement and a national campaign to build religious support. Political history was made, too, when UMWA District 28 President Jackie Stump won a seat in the Virginia House of Delegates after an independent write-in campaign that lasted just two weeks. And in a shift from the Bush administration hands-off policy toward labor disputes, Labor Secretary Elizabeth Dole appointed a "supermediator" who ultimately helped bring the conflict to an end.

By the time the miners ratified a new contract in February 1990, more than 3,000 people had offered themselves for arrest, the roster of union visitors topped 50,000, and camouflage—the uniform adopted by the strikers—had spread through the ranks of the labor movement.

Preparation by both sides began long before the strike call on April 5, 1989. Five years earlier, Pittston hired a management team under the direction of Paul W. Douglas and began transferring vast tracts of coal lands planned for union mines into its non-union division. By the time of the strike, that strategy had already cost more than 4,000 union jobs.

In late 1987, Pittston pulled out of the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA), the industry group that conducted national bargaining with the UMWA. Following the lead of A.T. Massey Co., which had engaged the union in a bitter strike in 1984-85, Pittston hired Vance International, a para-military-style guard company profiled in Soldier of Fortune *magazine. And they engaged the law firm used by Massey.*

Shortly before the date of the contract expiration—February 1, 1988—Pittston mailed letters to approximately 1,500 retirees, widows and disabled miners informing them of the imminent cutoff of family medical benefits. That coverage had been promised for life under the UMWA/BCOA contract.

To UMWA strategists, the company's tactics smelled like bait. But the union knew that to call a strike at that point would be self-defeating because the company could hire permanent replacements of striking workers unless there

was proof of unfair labor practices. So before striking, the union wanted to document illegal practices to the National Labor Relations Board.

Even with proof of unfair labor practices, which were documented over the next 14-months as miners worked without a contract, the union faced an uphill battle. Organizers realized the strike would be hard to win in a "right-to-work" state like Virginia, where the climate toward unions was cooler than a January midnight in the Arctic. UMWA leaders vowed that they would beat the odds. The key would be civil resistance. The tactic, which relied on sit-ins and other acts of civil disobedience, had been employed in the Massey strike but never as a centerpiece of strike strategy. UMWA vice president Cecil Roberts delved into the history of the use of nonviolence by Martin Luther King Jr. in the civil rights movement.

Civil disobedience would be coupled with a massive mobilization of local and national support. And to build the base of community support, the union would depend, as it always had, on the women.

At the union's headquarters, preliminary Pittston strike plans contain no mention of women's involvement. I raise the issue with a senior staff member who assigns me to begin outreach efforts. I enlist Cosby Totten, a laid-off woman miner with experience in women's organizing, and Catherine Tompa, another laid-off UMWA member active on the district union level.

By their numbers alone, the women of the Pittston strike made history. More than 500 volunteered for active duty; including the women of West Virginia and Kentucky, the number was probably closer to 1,000. Miners' wives, daughters, mothers and sisters formed UMWA auxiliaries, set up picket lines, got arrested, fed thousands of supporters, conducted jail vigils, fielded constant media pressures and staged an occupation at the company's Virginia headquarters. In addition, the few rank-and-file women miners who had escaped Pittston's earlier layoffs stood picket duty with their male co-workers.

Ironically, the success of the women's auxiliaries created problems. Escalating strike demands took precedence over building an organization, dealing with conflict and clarifying their relationship with the national union. In contrast, rank-and-file miners could rely on local union bylaws, a constitution and a clearly defined chain of command.

The women of the strike also faced problems common to women in male unions: female role stereotyping, exclusion from the decision-making process, lack of recognition and the periodic failure by leadership to understand and support their needs as a group. But the women's commitment never wavered. Despite external pressures and inevitable conflicts, they kept doggedly working to win the strike.

When the Pittston miners ratified the agreement after months of mediation, the union claimed victory. They had gained some job security protections and preserved their medical benefits for active workers. Retiree health care would also be preserved and their needs addressed by a federal commission.

Pittston came away with gains as well, including flexibility in scheduling work shifts, which allowed for a highly stressful swing shift. In addition, the company did not rehire more than 300 workers after the strike and has laid off more since.

While most miners gladly returned to their jobs after the strike officially ended, many of their wives found it harder to be content with their former lives. "It was hard to go back to washing walls and windows," one auxiliary member commented. As a result, many have continued activist work, launching an oral history project and traveling to picket lines around the nation to offer support.

What legacy of activism did the Pittston strike create? In the end the answer may come from the women who were transformed from the experience and whose lives are still in the process of change.

Lisa Rasnick part 1

On Nealy Ridge in Dickenson County in early 1988, 15-year-old Lisa Rasnick listened as her father talked. "We're having problems at the mine," he said. "We'll probably have to strike."

She was only half-listening. Her dad had said things like that before, but he'd always taken care of things. When a pet died, he was the one who buried it. He'd always shielded the family from the effects of anything bad.

She thought more about getting her homework done and taking care of her little brother and sister and about her career goal after high school: joining the Virginia state police. They were respected because they helped people. And their uniforms were so clean and pressed-looking. After high school, she planned to study law enforcement. A coal strike wouldn't threaten her future. She felt sure of that.

Kay Heaton & Janice LaForce part 1

On the other side of Dickenson County, Kay Heaton sat in her home on Hazel Mountain and worried about Janice, her widowed sister who lived just down the ridge. Somehow, Kay had to find a way to get Janice out of the house, out of her depression.

It wouldn't be easy. Janice, 50, had lost her husband Worley from cancer in 1986, not long after he'd retired after working 28 years in underground mines. Janice stayed in the house with her other two children and grieved. "Everywhere I looked, I saw something his hands had made," she said. Seven months later, their 25-year-old son Michael died in a car wreck. After Michael died, she couldn't go into her son's room. The house was closing in. "I would sit and cry," she said. "I couldn't do nothing."

Then the house itself began to come apart. Directly below, Pittston had built a longwall mine to extract the mountain's rich seams of high-grade metallurgical coal. Longwalls can be destructive; as the land sinks, houses crack, and water tables disappear. One Thanksgiving, Janice turned on her faucet and found it dry. Then she noticed cracks in the cement-block foundation. When she called Pittston, officials offered to send bottled water and a crew to do repairs, but the water didn't taste right, and, to her mind, the crew did more damage than good.

A few months later, in January 1988, a letter arrived from Pittston stating that her medical benefits, guaranteed for life as a widow of a UMWA miner, would end when the union's contract expired on February 1. Her depression deepened. On her UMWA pension and black lung check, she was barely getting by. Kay worried about Janice, but she didn't know what to do.

February 1988: In a hotel meeting room in Charleston, W.Va., UMWA field organizers, myself included, listen to civil rights and peace activists explain how to run a nonviolent campaign. Many in the room are veterans of Vietnam and of mine wars at home: Brookside, Stearns, Massey. They are trained in violence. But they respond. In a sit-in role play, I link arms with an executive board member and am dragged across the floor.

The history of UMWA women's auxiliaries, despite their innocuous-sounding name, had as much to do with militant action as with bake sales. Mother Jones, the fiery labor organizer, led "dish pan armies" of miners' wives to confront mine guards and strikebreakers by banging pots and pans during the early 1900s. Three generations later, women in the Brookside strike in 1974-75 in Harlan County, Ky., braved gunfire to stand the picket line when their husbands were barred by injunction.

The commitment of auxiliary members to the UMWA was rooted in unionism, not feminism; as historian Priscilla Long describes, these women were the "militant mothers" whose goal was to defend their families, not fight for equal rights. Feminists have often devalued women's traditional work of nurture and family care, so important to working-class families. And many unions have resisted advances in women's equality. The Pittston strike provided a challenge to both those views.

For several months Cosby Totten, Catherine Tompa and I fan out over the coalfields. Catherine and Cosby log hundreds of miles driving to local union meetings to talk with the men about setting up auxiliaries. After a number of groups are functioning on their own, we work with them to create a district-wide organization that will bring them together to build strike support.

Spring 1988: At Local Union 7170 hall in Haysi, auxiliary leader Carolyn Sluss shows me the basement, newly remodeled by the men for the women's group. A large group of wives and children arrive, wearing new black-and-white auxiliary T-shirts. There is much laughter and discussion.

Kay Heaton & Janice LaForce part 2

When she heard about the women's meeting at the Dante Community Center, Kay urged Janice to go with her. Reluctantly, Janice agreed. With her daughter Teresa, she got into Kay's car and rode down the mountain to meet other miners' wives.

Before long, Janice and Kay were spending all their spare time helping prepare for the strike. The auxiliaries set up phone trees, visited merchants and organized community marches in Clintwood, Haysi, Honaker, Richlands, Lebanon and St. Paul.

And when the UMWA needed informational pickets at Pittston's Lebanon office, auxiliaries set up the line. Soon they were joined by pensioners and disabled miners

like Gail Gentry. He packed up his wheelchair and drove nearly 100 miles twice a week to join the group, which weathered nearly a year on the picket line before the strike was called.

July 1988: About 20 picketers set up a tent at the entrance to the Lebanon office. I visit a cheerful group of young women, old women, pensioners, children and grandchildren. We unpack signs, dog-eared from use, with slogans like "Pittston Stole My Health Care." Maxie Hawkins brings out her brightly-striped beach umbrella. Janice and Kay are turning bronze in the sun. Cosby Totten's face is swollen with sun blisters. The group shares lawn chairs and ice and sunscreen. We wave signs at passing cars: "UMWA all the way—HONK that horn!"

As the months passed, the honking grew louder. When winter came on, the group set up heaters and Coleman stoves and brought steaming pots of soup beans. They made birthday cakes for each other, and they endured. Janice noticed her depression had lifted. "To miss a day about killed me," she said. "We were like one big ole family."

The knot of solidarity had been tied. By the strike call in April, the picketers were ready for action.

The Women Occupy the Pittston Building, Lebanon, Va.

The Daughters of Mother Jones are Born

When Janice got up on the morning of April 18, she was out of bottled water. She was irritated. It might be a long time before she could bathe again.

Women were already gathering when she and Kay drove up to the house near Lebanon. The mood was tense and expectant. The group included miners' wives, widows and daughters. About half were veterans of the Lebanon picket line, but the rest were strangers to one another, and shy.

In a flurry of late-night phone calls, the word had passed: wear a white blouse, bring a warm jacket and your regular medicine and leave your identification at home. Janice took her tum as each stepped up to receive a white-carnation corsage, a small American flag and a scarf cut from a length of camouflage turkey veil.

The plan was simple and nerve-jarring: to occupy the Pittston regional office in the first act of civil disobedience of the two-week-old strike. The event would draw media attention to the strike and reinforce two main themes: that the strike was family-based and nonviolent.

It is the night before the occupation. I search for the strike coordinator to discuss details of the occupation which he had assigned me to help coordinate. I find him outside with his team. Dusk is falling. In full camouflage, the men silently circle me. They all stand over six feet and look taller in their lace-up combat boots. The strike chief looks at me. "The ball's in your court now," he says in a voice that challenges me. "Can you handle it?" I feel isolated but respond with confidence.

Most of the women were nervous. One woman warned that her sister had a tendency to pass out under stress. A petite blonde said, shrilly, that she might get hysterical if the police showed up. Another woman, seven months pregnant, was not feeling well but was determined to go in. We made a head count and did a final medicine check.

Anxious questions began: Are we going to jail? Will we have a telephone? How long are we staying in? Will it be a felony? Should we give our names?

The last question triggered debate. The issue was security. With Vance guards headquartered in the building, the group would be under constant surveillance. And if Pittston had names, harassment could follow. The women discussed using a symbolic name. Cosby Totten suggested the Daughters of Mother Jones. There was instant agreement. Quickly the group numbered off: Daughter Number 1, Daughter Number 2 through Number 39. Janice was Number 33, and Kay was 34. The name gave strength, like a shield.

The husbands who had volunteered to drive the women to the Pittston office pulled their vehicles out just after 9:00 a.m.

At the Pittston office, which was poised on a green slope just off Lebanon's main road, retired miners cheered as the women's caravan, with headlights blazing, turned up toward the building.

Janice's heart beat faster. Pittston had invaded nearly every aspect of her life—her marriage, her home and her health card.

Now it was her turn in invade Pittston.

"May I help you?" the receptionist asked. She stared at the group of women dressed alike, sitting demurely in the Pittston lobby.

Her high heels clicked across the floor.

"Is this a sit-in?" she said with a look of dismay. Softly, the song began:

We shall not be

We shall not be moved…

The receptionist turned back sharply toward the counter, pulled a blind down and disappeared from view. She never reappeared.

Another woman rushed out of the bathroom, leaving her makeup behind. Company officials hurriedly erected partitions at one end of the large room, where several offices opened into the lobby area.

Local TV news crews set up cameras and lights. They were joined by reporters from the *Washington Post* and from Roanoke and Bristol, Va.

When asked her name on camera, one young woman replied that she was the Daughter of Mother Jones Number 10. The reporter blinked, then backed up and said, "Who is Mother Jones?" The scene was repeated as reporters were forced to preface every story with a sound bite of labor history. The women waved the tiny flags and kept singing union songs and hymns: "This Little Light of Mine," "Down by the Picket Line," "Which Side Are You On?" "Amazing Grace" and "Solidarity Forever."

By noon the men were gathering at the bottom of the hill. They ordered pizzas for the women's army. A guard on the hill ordered the delivery person off Pittston property. Strike coordinator Marty Hudson devised another approach. A group of pensioners and wives, with Gail Gentry in his wheelchair, started up the steep hill. Gail wheeled himself, a case of canned soft drinks in his lap.

By the time the group entered the lobby, Gail was sweating with the effort. The women cheered. Some wept. Pittston officials came out to the lobby to inform the group that no one else would be allowed in. They would allow two women, escorted by guards, to go to a side door to receive deliveries from two men. The women ordered aspirin, combs, contact lens solution, deodorant and cigarettes.

With each care package came a stack of love notes addressed to the women by number. Fred wrote Kay, Number 34, "I'm proud of you." Kay wrote back, "Don't worry. I'll be out when the last one's out." Janice sang until her voice rasped. In one comer two women offered fervent prayers and sang hymns a capella. Then a group joined hands in a circle and clog-danced. The TV cameras whirred.

As we circle-dance to women's singing, I squeeze back tears. We are a circle of laughter and power, and we connect. In this circle I feel no isolation. I am Daughter Number 35. What is solidarity anyway? A circle of sharing or a ladder of command?

Gradually the fatigue set in. As a haze of blue cigarette smoke hung in the air, it became clear that Pittston had shut off the ventilation. The women began to get hoarse, and they quieted. Late in the afternoon the men delivered a pile of blankets and pillows. Shortly afterward, a Pittston official chained the front door shut with a padlock but was so nervous he broke the key in the lock.

As the night wore on, the air turned icy. The air conditioning had been turned on to full power, and the ceiling lights blazed. Vance guards patrolled regularly. Women shivered under the thin blankets and talked and laughed. With all the discomfort it seemed like a slumber party.

Janice kept watching Bulldog—one of the guards the picketers had named over the months—as he prowled up and down the hall. She couldn't bring herself to lie down on the stone floor.

In the morning the men sent up breakfast from McDonald's. Several women, including pregnant Sandra Robinson, needed to leave and walked out in a group. For the rest, the day dragged on.

In small groups we discuss our options. Most weren't prepared for a long siege. Others, however, want to stay until they are carried away. It's hard to give up this ground. The strike coordinator sends a note directing us to leave at 4 p.m., and the game plan doesn't call for independent decisions.

Besides, our mission has been accomplished; the story had been carried widely. We line up and prepare to go.

As we come out of the building, a cheer rises from the bottom of the hill. With arms raised, we

AS WE COME OUT OF THE BUILDING, A CHEER RISES FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE HILL. WITH ARMS RAISED, WE CLASP HANDS AND DECEND, SINGING "SOLIDARITY FOREVER."

clasp hands and descend, singing "Solidarity Forever." Pensioners and auxiliary members march up to meet us, carrying a hand-painted banner that says, "We Love You UMWA Daughters." The tears roll down my face as we walk into a sea of open arms.

The women's occupation marked the beginning of the implementation of the strategy of civil disobedience. On April 24 several hundred strikers in full camouflage sat down and locked arms at the picket line at the McClure No. 1 mine.

Tension built as state police gathered and prepared to move in. As they pulled the strikers apart, they twisted arms, pulled men up by their ears and used choke holds that nearly caused several men to pass out. They broke the arm of James Gibbs, the only black miner in the crowd. A woman miner in her 60s, June "Granny" Mullins, required surgery after she received facial injuries during her arrest. In all, seven people were sent to the hospital with injuries.

A few weeks later 18 women sat down at the McClure mine for a group arrest. When they were taken to Clintwood, the jailer only had space for 10 women. They drew lots. Kay stayed, but Janice had to leave. She got a little mad. She thought she'd earned the right to stay.

Friction begins to develop between some women who were involved from "day one" and those who joined later. Because of the strike's pressing demands, monthly meetings have lapsed, and leadership is unclear. The glare of the media spotlight doesn't help. Tension simmers, creating hairline fractures in the group. I voice concern to strike leaders about the potential split.

Shirley Johnson part 1

In early May Shirley Johnson's phone rang. It was Tammy, her daughter-in-law, urging her to go to the picket line at Moss 3 preparation plant.

Shirley, a tall, jovial woman, resisted. Home and family were her priorities. "I was a quiet housewife. I never spoke out or expressed my opinion in a crowd," she said. Her days were routine: getting up before dawn to pack Roger's dinner bucket, cooking and cleaning and being there for her near-grown kids. In the afternoon she watched her soaps: *Days of Our Lives, Another World* and *Santa Barbara.* "Thursday was my big day," she laughed. That's when she went shopping at Food City.

But Tammy insisted. "If you won't do it for yourself," she said, "do it for Roger." Shirley gave in. She'd just go out and see what was happening. She pulled her son's camouflage pants out of the dryer and put on her husband's shirt and cap. Driving up to Moss 3 preparation plant, she saw such a crowd that she had to park the car a half-mile away. Shirley didn't know anybody. She paced back and forth in the crowd and listened to people talk.

Then she saw the truck. It was the same truck Roger drove for Pittston —except for the strikebreaker behind the wheel. "I got so angry—I didn't know I could get that mad," she said. "I wanted to pick up a rock and knock that scab out of the truck. It took everything I had in me to stay nonviolent."

Down the road at another site, four picketers had been injured when a trucker drove through the picket line. Word spread quickly. The crowd tensed. Then, in large groups, protestors began sitting down in the entrance to block the coal trucks.

On impulse Shirley and Tammy walked out in the road and sat down. A minister gave prayer. The crowd standing on either side began singing as state police carried them off, one by one. Two police picked Shirley up and hauled her to the bus. By mid-afternoon, she had been frisked, photographed, finger-printed and charged with obstructing free passage. "I started out the day in the kitchen and ended it in jail," she said.

It was her first day on the picket line. Before long, she had forgotten all about the soaps.

Moss 3 picket line, May 1989: I am in a sea of camouflage in motion. State police form a line on the perimeter of the crowd, which swells on both sides of the mine entrance. Women cluster in front, yelling at truck drivers and giving the thumbs down. Video cameras are everywhere—those of the Vance guards, the state police, a striker in camouflage and media crews. Three police buses await their human cargo, looking like odd-colored school buses.

Strike coordinator Marty Hudson, in a crisp white shirt and camouflage pants, climbs onto the top of the picket shack with his bullhorn: "You KNOW what you're doing is right! We're having a nonviolent strike, and we're winning!"

Lisa Rasnick part 2

At Haysi High School, two of Lisa's friends approached her in the hall. "Our parents are in jail," one

said, "and so are yours." Lisa froze. "I knew my parents were going to the picket line and then to the community center, but it was their thing, not mine. It was like they just went off to work every day," she said.

"But it hit me that this was not just their fight anymore. If this meant enough to them to go to jail, then I needed to stand beside them."

A group of students gathered in the hall to discuss the problem. One boy distributed camouflage bandanas and T-shirts. They decided to see the principal as a group, to ask for excused absences to go to the county jail.

That night, she waited for her parents to come home after their release. "I told them, 'everybody I love, everybody I care for, is getting stomped on. I have to do something.'"

In Clintwood the next morning she joined a crowd of camouflage-clad students who had walked out of classes at two other high schools. "It was incredible. People at other high schools did the same thing we did. It was like spontaneous combustion," she said. Soon, a UMWA student auxiliary had been formed. Lisa arranged to make up missed classes during the last few weeks of school.

As the number of state police swelled to more than 300, community resentment increased. Troopers ignored speeding coal truck drivers and stopped funeral processions and mail delivery to wave coal trucks through. Hostility flamed into outrage when police handcuffed one group of strikers, forced them to kneel in a ditch and held shotguns on them.

Signs of populist sentiment appeared. Tiny handcuffs were fashioned into earrings and signs sprouted on barns and telephone posts: "Welcome to Virginia: A Police State" and "Governor Baliles: This is Southwest Virginia, Not South Africa." A store owner displayed a large sign: "We Respectfully Refuse to Serve State Troopers During the UMWA Strike."

Strike supporters found ways to vent frustration. Troopers discovered skunk scent in vehicles and dead possums on the road spiked with "jackrocks," nails spot-welded and twisted into an "X" to puncture tires.

A Sunday morning before dawn: I am asleep in my hotel room at the Norton, Va., Holiday Inn. For months union staff has shared the hotel with a contingent of state police. Outside, the parking lot is jammed with more than 40 state police vehicles.

Raucous laughter erupts from the next room. Groggy, I crawl to the locked door that joins the two rooms and put my ear to the door, which feels cold. It sounds like the state police. "Tomorrow we're to going to get the sonofabitch," one says. "It's about goddamned time," says the other. "And what about that bitch you've got your eye on at Moss 3?" "The hell I do," the first trooper says, and laughs.

Shirley Johnson part 2

By late May, Shirley was driving to the picket line every day, and her sons joked about needing an appointment to see Their Mom the Radical.

On her court date she drove to the Lebanon courthouse, which was crowded with men and women in camouflage. The judge considered a long list of arrests and put Shirley's group on six-months' probation. "To get the charges dropped, we had to be good," she said.

That proved to be difficult. The next day, when she saw a trooper stopping traffic for the coal trucks, Shirley walked back out in the road and sat down. This time her bond was raised from $500 to $10,000.

"He gave me big lecture about breaking the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia and fined me $250," she recalled. "He told me if I had as much as a speeding ticket, I'd pull 60 days. At that point, I didn't care."

In early June a federal court judge ordered three strike leaders sent to federal prison in Roanoke for contempt of court in an attempt to stop civil disobedience. In state court Judge Don McGlothlin Jr. threatened fines that could bankrupt the union. The fines would double every day that sit-ins occurred. In a few months, union leaders commented, the fines would equal the federal deficit.

In Roanoke the women began a jail vigil to support the imprisoned strike leaders. For two weeks, they camped in front of the jail, setting up lawn chairs and giving interviews and walking in groups to a nearby parking lot where they could wave at the prisoners. The demonstration drew support from Roanoke's labor community, but for the women, it revealed strains that threatened to split the group apart.

June 1989: The sun is hot. We are all exhausted. Some women aren't sleeping at all. Under pressure, tempers flare. A question arises: who can be a member of the Daughters of Mother Jones? And who is in the auxiliary? Without officers, leadership is unclear.

The strike coordinator, Marty Hudson, who has been directing the auxiliaries, is in jail. He has announced a hunger strike—unless he can eat union food. Under great stress the women organize a home-cooked meal and carry it to the jail. Prison officials turn the women back. They are distraught.

With the jailing of Marty Hudson, the reins were passed to Eddie Burke, a veteran of the Massey strike, and the union shifted from sit-in tactics to other forms of nonviolent protest. By mid-June sympathy strikes began spreading through the nation's coalfields. More than 40,000 miners put down their tools in protest. Many walked off their jobs and straight to their cars and drove to Southwest Virginia. Caravans of "tourists" poured into the strike zone. They participated in "rolling roadblocks" of slow-moving vehicles that could force speeding coal trucks to drive the speed limit on the narrow roads. State police, who were now accompanied by U.S. Marshals, began more mass arrests. With a string of blue lights flashing, they placed double charges against out-of-state drivers: impeding traffic and contempt of court.

Lisa Rasnick part 3

When school ended, Lisa started volunteering at the Binns-Counts Community Center, which sat directly on the major coal-haul road to Pittston's McClure No. 1 mine. The center, supported by church funds, was named in memory of Margaret Binns, an Episcopal deaconess, and Mary Kathleen "Cat" Counts, a coal miner killed in the 1983 McClure explosion that killed seven local miners. Quickly it became a union gathering place, a later a pressure point as state troopers formed police lines a few feet from the center's front door.

At Binns-Counts, Lisa joined a hard-working group of women preparing food for crowds of out-of-state supporters who had come to be tourists in the strike zone. The women gave support to each other and developed a strong sense of identity in running the center. Lisa needed support. Both her parents were ill that summer, so she cared for them and her siblings, and she worked every day at the center.

In June the student auxiliary led a march to commemorate the victims of the McClure explosion. Six local boys represented the men who died. Lisa represented Cat Counts. State police gathered to monitor the crowd.

As the memorial service began in a nearby ball field, leaders of the event asked the state police to remove their hats. They refused. As a local minister led the assembly in prayer, a police helicopter descended and hovered a few feet above the minister's head. Its roar blotted out the prayer. Lisa choked back her anger. But looking at the victims' families, she could not hold back her tears.

Soon afterwards, a young miner from Kentucky at the community center gave Lisa a union pin for her collection. The next day, he came in with a bandaged arm. He'd been stuck by a coal truck. Upset, she went outside. As coal trucks roared by, one of the truckers blew her a lewd kiss. A young state policeman apologized. "He told me he was sorry, that he had to be here," she said. "That really got to me. I started yelling at him: 'You don't have to be here! You're not sorry! You're helping these scabs take my dad's job. How much would it take to say no?'

"All my life I'd respected the state police and the courts and the government," she said. "It left like my whole world was falling apart."

Sharon Fleming part 1

The thousands of "tourists" pouring into Southwest Virginia needed a place to call home. They found it at Camp Solidarity, tucked in the backwoods off the main road near the Moss 3 complex. Once a private club, the 10-acre field was transformed as strikers built a bunkhouse, showers, and expanded kitchen and a speakers' platform. Tents popped up, and campfires flickered at night as visitors gathered to hear music and swap stories.

Like Binns-Courts, the camp was staffed by a close-knit crew of women who sustained a thriving strike community that resembled a months-long family reunion. For Sharon Fleming it was unforgettable.

"I hardly ever sleept, but I was never tired," she said. "We were like a puzzle where every piece fit." Working seven days a week, the camp crew welcomed up to 1,200 visitors a day, unloaded truckloads of donated food and prepared home-cooked meals. The men cooked breakfast, and the women made dinner. From their homes nearly 100 additional women cooked and sent food to be laid out on a 30-foot wooden table.

Camp Solidarity, July 1989: Local musicians play banjos and guitars while the women, wearing bright red suspenders over their camouflage T-shirts, greet incoming busloads of auto workers. The visitors form a long line to the lunch buffet.

The amount and variety of the food is staggering: fried chicken, fresh catfish, meat loaf, pork chops, roast turkey, creamed potatoes, fresh tomatoes, green beans and salads of every description. And the desserts: double-fudge chocolate cakes, blackberry pie, peach pie, deep bowls of banana pudding, coconut cake, butterscotch pie, Oreo cakes, peanut butter rolls and brownies.

This is the warm, maternal heart of the strike. I am struck by the importance of "women's work," without which the union's strategy cannot succeed.

More than 50,000 union supporters found their way to Camp Solidarity, and no one ever wanted to leave. The roster included national union presidents, rank-and-file leaders from the Soviet coal strike, Swedes, Guatemalans and the first representatives of the Polish Solidarity movement to gain a visa to the United States. Perhaps more importantly for the U.S. labor movement, Camp Solidarity became a magnet that drew rubber workers, glass workers, striking pilots, machinists, garment workers and an endless host of unionists to debate tactics for protecting workers' rights in the post-Reagan years.

At camp the circle of solidarity widened to encompass the globe.

While support poured in from outside, the women's groups struggled with the growing demand for their labor and with internal problems. Much responsibility had fallen to the two women miners hired to help build the groups. When tensions developed between the two women, concerned auxiliary members appealed to strike leaders to help resolve the differences, but male officials adopted a hands-off policy toward these conflicts.

I puzzle over this enigma: why won't the union respond to this potentially explosive problem? Family support is the glue holding the strike together. On many issues the UMWA is visionary, but about women, the organization, like society at large, can be extremely nearsighted. Myopia can impair effectiveness. With no means of resolving conflict or for women to voice their concerns, the union risks alienating its staunchest supporters.

The strike leaders are exhausted. They shift from a more participatory style to a military chain of command. This further isolates the women.

As the summer passes, the union directs the women into increasingly restricted and polarized roles. One group stuffs envelopes, another makes phone calls, sorts through donated clothes or attends court hearings. I am removed from working with the women and given other assignments.

While Camp Solidarity was safe from harassment by Vance guards and state police, private homes were not. Leaders of student auxiliaries and other strike activists noticed men in dark blue uniforms parked near their homes with video cameras. If a family was away, Vance guards sometimes crossed front lawns to peer in the windows.

Marie Hale, a 67-year-old great-grandmother who had been arrested on the picket line, and her husband Damon, a disabled miner, noticed Vance guards watching their house one night. The road was private property. It belonged to the homeowners in the subdivision. The next night, when the surveillance truck reappeared, Damon and a group of neighbors drove their vehicles behind the guards and blocked them in.

The incident brought increased harassment for the Hales from the state troopers. To Marie, some of it seemed racially motivated. (The Hales are black.) "It seemed like they couldn't let Damon out of their sight. They'd follow him and pull him over, and he wasn't even on the picket lines," said Marie.

One night, the police pulled him over on his way home from working in a garden they owned near the river. Since the area was remote, Damon had taken a gun with him. When the police followed him home and seized the legally registered gun, Damon got angry. Then they charged him with resisting arrest. After they booked him in jail, Damon had to be rushed to the hospital with an attack of high blood pressure. Later, the charges were dropped.

Every Wednesday night, work stops as several thousand strike supporters pour onto a ball field in St. Paul, Va., to rally for the cause. At one Wednesday night rally the crowd clamors for Vice President Cecil Roberts. In the coalfields, Cecil's oratory is legendary. Like Martin Luther King Jr., Cecil speaks to the spiritual base of the struggle. Despite the skepticism expressed by those outside the strike, I know that the struggle is deeply rooted in the Bible and in the union which has, historically, brought redemption. I am not a church-goer, but feel the first strong stirrings of faith. What is this strike that it has such effects? But it's not just a strike, Cecil tells the crowd. "What we've got here is a struggle for freedom!"

Janice LaForce part 3

Late one night in August, Janice woke up in trouble. Pain crushed

her chest. She started to pray For the next several hours, she struggled to breathe until, finally, the pain subsided.

Her daughter Teresa insisted that she go to the doctor, but Janice said no. "I'd lost my health insurance," she said, "and I couldn't afford any hospital bills." She borrowed a nitroglycerin tablet from her brother and went to the courthouse, where AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland, UMWA president Richard Trumka and other labor leaders were being arrested in a sit-down.

That night, she broke out in a cold sweat and shook in her nightgown as another attack came on. This time, she allowed Teresa to drive her to a clinic. "The doctor wanted to put dye in to check my heart, but I didn't have the money," she said. He gave her some heart pills and Bufferin and told her not to get excited.

Janice made a promise to herself. She'd be careful, but she wasn't going to quit the strike. She's already gotten hauled off by police in two arrests. If necessary, she was willing to get carried away again.

Moss 3: The Men's Occupation:
Operation Flintstone

I leave Washington at 4 a.m. to drive the dark tunnel of I-81 south. The eight-hour trip grows more tiring each week. In five months I have not seen a single state trooper on the interstate. They've apparently all been reassigned to Southwest Virginia.

Throughout September, the coordinator of Camp Solidarity had told the crew of women to keep back the canned Treet. "We knew something was up, but nobody was talking," recalled Sharon Fleming.

On Sunday afternoon, September 17, the camp women were instructed to go to a meeting near the district office. When they arrived, a large group of women had assembled including Kay Heaton, Janice LaForce and Shirley Johnson. They were to follow a caravan to an undisclosed location.

As the vehicles snaked toward the plant, they got the news: a group of 98 UMWA members and one Methodist minister had seized the Moss 3 preparation plant in a nonviolent takeover. The women jubilantly honked their horns. For months, Moss 3 had been off limits due to the judge's order. Now it felt like they were coming home.

Dressed in camouflage and blaze-orange vests, the men had jogged across the bridge several hundred yards to the plant, climbed the steps and locked themselves in the control room. The few Vance guards had fled. In backpacks, the men carried in a 10-day supply of food and other essentials: portable TVs, decks of cards, Bibles and water jugs. They'd loaded up at Camp Solidarity after the women had left.

Sharon immediately returned to camp. They face a formidable task: organizing food for the swelling crowd who had vowed to form a human barricade between occupiers and police.

I am the last member of the strike task force informed about the men's occupation. Other organizers tell me the strike coordinator was clear; no women would be included in "Operation Flintstone." It strikes me that my experience of exclusion mirrors that of the women's groups, with one difference: they can discuss their feelings, but as a staffer, I cannot.

IT STRIKES ME THAT MY EXPERIENCE OF EXCLUSION MIRRORS THAT OF THE WOMEN'S GROUPS, WITH ONE DIFFERENCE: THEY CAN DISCUSS THEIR FEELINGS, BUT AS A STAFFER, I CANNOT.

Once again the strike had made history. It was the first union occupation of a production plant since the famous sit-down strike in a Flint, Mich., auto plant in 1937.

The air chilled as evening approached. Shirley couldn't sit still. All night, she walked up and down the road with friends. In the darkness beyond the glare of police floodlights, they passed sleeping forms wrapped in coats, blankets and sleeping bags. Some simply lay on pieces of cardboard on the cold ground. For awhile, she stopped by a bonfire that blazed near the picket shack. Before dawn the crowd was stirring. If the police had plans to move in for arrests, that was the most likely time.

Back at Camp Solidarity, the women had worked through the night. By morning, they had cooked 250 dozen eggs and 150 pounds of bacon and loaded up a pickup. Sharon drove. At the perimeter she got through a police line to deliver breakfast to the more than 1,000

supporters that formed the human barricade.

As the day wore on, anxiety grew about the police blockade. Rumors flew that if supporters left the area they would not be allowed back through police lines. Shirley wasn't worried. With a friend she took orders for supplies, then drove out the river road and over back roads through Back Valley and Rocky Fork.

When Shirley stopped at her home, her 19-year-old son John pleaded with her not to return to Moss 3. "He knew it was a risk for me to be there if they started arresting people. He was worried that I'd have to pull 60 days," she said. "I told him I'd watch out, but I wasn't going to run from an arrest." She and her friend drove back to Moss 3.

That night Kay and Janice slept in their car. They cracked the windows and talked far into the night. On Monday they went home and took showers and gathered some quilts to take back. On Monday night Kay's husband Fred joined them. The strike supporters continued to arrive, parking more than a mile away and walking in. By Wednesday the crowd numbered more than 5,000 and tension was at a fever pitch. The federal judge ordered the men out; but the brigade won extra time and then slipped out under the cover of dark.

After the men came out, Kay started discussing the women's occupation with a few friends. "We all wanted to do more actions like the occupation," she said, "but it seemed like the women got to do less and less as time went on." And while the men had received souvenir scrapbooks, T-shirts and other memorabilia that had been put together under the strike coordinator's direction, the women did not receive that kind of recognition. "It wasn't glory we wanted," Kay said. "It was respect."

Sharon Fleming part 2

The weather grew colder, but the crew at Camp Solidarity stoked the coal-burning stone to warm the bunkhouse for supporters who continued to arrive for strike rallies. One day they had an unexpected surprise: a crew of gourmet chefs arrived to take over the cooking. A national union had offered the UMWA the services of the chefs, which the union accepted with gratitude. Union officials made plans, informed strike leaders and set up the tentative date of arrival. But they forgot one thing: to inform the camp's women.

"It was a shock to us. We'd made this place our lives, and we had camp running smoothly, and all of a sudden, everything was changed and nobody even told us," said Sharon. But the group worked hard to make the chefs feel welcome and, gradually, to rebuild the spirit of solidarity.

At a staff meeting strike organizers gather around a kerosene stove in the frosty air of a large fieldhouse. The strike coordinator jokes about the women's groups. "Who's got the women this week?" he says and points to a nearby union official who shrugs. "Lucky man," the coordinator says as the other men laugh sympathetically. I stew in silence. The problem is, I love this union. These men aren't cruel or deceitful, but they have grown more uncomfortable as the women have voiced their ideas and concerns. When the women raise a problem, they're blamed as the problem.

The strike wore on. The supermediator announced that an agreement will be reached by the holidays. Everyone waited and hoped. Finally, on New Year's Day, 1990, a tentative agreement was reached. The reaction was relief and caution. The men want to see the fine print of the contract. In February the miners voted to ratify the agreement.

Epilogue

Coal strikes rarely have clear-cut endings. At the Pittston mines in Appalachia, the struggle continues for families facing joblessness and mine closures. Huge fines linger, threatening the finances of UMWA District 28 and the national union.

For the women the challenge is to apply the skills and experience developed in the strike. "We've got to help those that helped us. Now they need us, like the Greyhound and Eastern strikers," said Janice LaForce. She and Kay Heaton are on the road now, traveling with a group that incorporated itself as the Daughters of Mother Jones.

At the Greyhound picket line in Chicago, Janice spotted a familiar face, a Vance guard from the Pittston strike. She recognized another in Roanoke.

Sharon Fleming, Lisa Rasnick and Shirley Johnson have joined the regrouped UMWA District 28 Family Auxiliary, which hopes to publish a book of oral history on the strike.

Lisa's career plans have changed. "I could never wear the uniform of the Virginia state police," she said. She is thinking instead of child psychology. "When the coal mines shut down around here,

families will be under stress, and the kids will need help," she said.

Her college plans received an unexpected blow when Pittston laid off her father. "It's hard after all the fighting we did," she said. "The strike doesn't feel like such a victory when your family is out of work."

In September Lisa and her mother attended the union's centennial convention in Miami Beach. They went to get answers: what did Pittston's layoffs mean? Would women be included in the union's plans?

They found the convention hall decked with banners and posters commemorating the strike. Union delegates crowded the floor, including a group from the Pittston locals. When they asked why she was there, she didn't know what to say. "Saying you're part of the auxiliary doesn't quite get it. We fought for the union too, but after all this time we don't know where we fit." The women finally found a seat in the back of the convention hall.

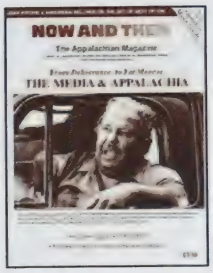
But when the crowd at the UMWA convention rose, joined hands and sang "Solidarity Forever," the tears came to Lisa's eyes as freely as they always had.

"If there is another strike, I'd be there giving 110 percent, but I'll go in as an equal. They treated it as a big victory, but all you saw was the men's victory. It was a women's victory, too," Lisa said.

"Next time we'll be smarter, and we'll demand more respect," Lisa said. "But if there is a coal miner in trouble anywhere, we'll put on our camouflage and go."

The strike ended a few short months ago, but already another labor dispute builds on the horizon, like a mass of thunderheads. After nearly seven years with the UMWA, I hand in my resignation, and I wonder, Will the union honor the talents of its women the next time around? ❖

Marat Moore was reared in Johnson City, TN, and moved to the West Virginia coalfields in 1977. She worked as an underground miner before joining the United Mine Workers of America staff in Washington, D.C. During the Pittston strike, Moore organized miners' wives for strike support and direct action, including a nonviolent occupation which led to the Daughters of Mother Jones. She lives in Jonesborough, TN.



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Listen to the Music in the Air:
Early Radio Days in East Tennessee

Richard Blaustein

Broadcasting is such a pervasive part of everyday life in modern America it is hard to realize that there are many people alive today who can remember when radio was still an exciting novelty. Though we tend to think of the Southern Appalachians as old-fashioned and isolated, it was not very long after KDKA in Pittsburgh, the first commercial radio station in the United States, went on the air in 1919 that pioneering broadcasters in Appalachia began experimenting with the new medium.

Straddling the Tennessee-Virginia line, the city of Bristol has played a prominent role in the recording *and* broadcasting of Appalachian music. Several years before Victor Records talent scout Ralph Peer recorded Jimmie Rodgers, the Carter Family and other notable regional musicians in a makeshift studio on the Tennessee side of State Street, Bristol was already the site of experimental country music broadcasts.

Bristol's first commercial broadcaster was a native of Greene County, Tenn., W. A. Wilson, Sr. Born in the remote Caney Branch community in 1892 not far from the rugged Shelton Laurel section of neighboring Madison County, N. C., Wilson became interested in telegraphy at a very early age. In 1907 Wilson was hired by the Louisville and Nashville Railroad as an assistant telegrapher. By 1920, he had become chief operator and head of the engineering department of the Western Union office in Bristol, Tenn. Wilson became interested in the commercial possibilities of radio and opened the area's first retail radio shop in 1923. As Wilson recollected in his unpublished memoirs:

> *I have the honors of selling the first domestic radio set in Bristol as far as anybody knows. This set was sold to a Mrs. Burke, the mother of Dent King Burke, a three tube Westinghouse set with batteries for the sum of $165.*

Radio broadcasting was still sporadic and unreliable during the early 1920s, which led Wilson to invent what seems to have been an early precursor of Muzak and cable broadcasting:

> *I thought it might be a good idea to arrange to furnish music by wire to hotels, business houses and restaurants, so a line was installed at the rear of buildings on the Virginia side [of State Street] from Front Street to Piedmont Street. An amplifier was installed at the Piedmont location . . . a spring turntable was installed at the residence (there were no electric turntables then), we played recordings but had to keep the turntable wound up. We also had a piano player, a Miss Edith McMillan.*

During these early years, Wilson continued to experiment with radio broadcasting. By 1925 country music lovers in the area were able to enjoy occasional programs of old-time string band music. Claude Grant (1902-1975), a Bristol native who toured briefly with Jimmie Rodgers before the Singing Brakeman made his recording debut in Bristol in 1927, took part in Wilson's pioneering broadcasts. Shortly before he died Grant told me:

> *I remember when Mr. Wilson was sorta experimenting with little crystal sets, radio. He was doing this at home. We used to go out to his home and fool around out there with him. And he finally got to where he could transmit, you know; send it out.*

In 1925, Wilson convinced the Sterchi Brothers furniture store in Bristol to sponsor a broadcast of an old-time string band contest including Claude Grant's band, the Tenneva Ramblers, Fiddling Dudley Vance and his family band from nearby Bluff City and several other local muscians. Listeners sending in postcards from the greatest distance won prizes from Sterchi's, which incidently enabled Wilson to test the range of his signal.

These experimental broadcasts continued for several years. Wilson assembled and tested professional quality equipment, received a license from what was then called the Federal Radio Commission, and officially launched WOPI, the oldest continuously operated commercial radio station in Northeast Tennessee, in 1929:

The studio and the transmitter were located at State and 22nd Streets in Bristol, Tennessee. We went on the air June 15, 1929, at 6 PM with 100 watts on 1500 kc but later had to move to 1490. Hours: 7:00 AM to 9 AM; 10 AM to 12 PM; 4 PM to 6:00 PM, and 8:00 PM to 10:00 PM. Why these hours? We had to let the motor-generators cool off every two hours.

A strong civic booster in Bristol throughout his long business career, Wilson's call letters stood for ***W**atch **O**ur **P**opulation **I**ncrease*. The lunch counter cynics along State Street preferred, however, to call the station ***W**ilson's **O**ld **P**honograph **I**nstitute*.

The year 1929 was not a good time for establishing any sort of new business, but somehow W. A. Wilson managed to survive the worst of the Great Depression, and by 1935, he had established the first radio barn dance program in the area, which he called the *Saturday Night Jamboree*. A number of well-known country performers from East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia appeared on the show, including the Carter Family, the Tenneva Ramblers, Archie Campbell, Charlie Bowman, Chet Atkins, Homer and Jethro, and Tennessee Ernie Ford, who worked as a part-time announcer on WOPI while still a high school student in Bristol. A matinee show for amateurs on Saturday afternoons gave many local performers their first radio broadcasting experience. As W. A. Wilson's son James C. Wilson recalled:

Saturday afternoon was country and hillbilly time at WOPI in Bristol. And they'd come there by truckloads from all over this area to play. And so Dad would put 'em on as soon as they could get 'em into the studio.

They only allowed fifty people at a time, so the other fifty people had to stay outside, 'cause the fire marshal wouldn't let but so many into the building. And also, outside they had some church organization that sold ice cream and watermelon. And so that went on all day.

And so we had plenty of good fiddling and plenty of good entertainment—that's the type of music my dad said would put fire in your heels. And that's exactly what he used to promote all the time—good country music.

By the late 1930s, though, WOPI was no longer the only commercial broadcaster in Northeast Tennessee. WJHL-AM was initiated in 1938 by a Johnson City businessman, Hanes Lancaster. (The station was purchased by James C. Wilson in 1960 and renamed WJCW). The following year, Lancaster launched his own Saturday afternoon amateur show live from the stage of the Bonnie Kate Theatre in Elizabethton, Tenn. During the early 1940s, the *Barrel of Fun* entertained an estimated audience of 3.5 million in the heartland of the Southern Appalachians. Some of the performers included Jim and Jesse McReynolds, Speedy Clark and the Lonesome Pine Boys, and local favorites such as Pappy Tom Slagle, George Simerly, Jack Lane, and Shorty Shehan.

So many of its performers were called up in the draft that the *Barrel of Fun* was discontinued in 1944. By the time it returned to the air in 1947, the *Barrel of Fun* was being overshadowed by WCYB (now WZAP) in Bristol, Va., which featured a wealth of exciting new bluegrass talent. Nearly all of the first generation bluegrass acts played on WCYB in the late 1940s and early 1950s, including such luminaries as Flatt and Scruggs, the Stanley Brothers, Mac Wiseman, Leslie Keith, Ralph Mayo and Carl Story, just to name a few.

By the mid-1950s, however, the rise of television, rock music and the centralization of the country music business in Nashville were bringing about the demise of live local country music broadcasting in Northeast Tennessee and elsewhere. But the tradition of music-making itself never died out entirely. It took new forms, such as the family country dance barn, or it simply returned to what it had been before the advent of radio: a favorite form of home entertainment.

It is curious to note that the only station still broadcasting live local country music in Northeast Tennessee today is W. A. Wilson's brainchild, WOPI, which recently celebrated its 62nd birthday. Still transmitting at a hundred watts, just as it did in 1929, WOPI offers a weekly live program featuring talent from Southwest Virginia and East Tennessee.

They say that radio signals radiate infinitely through space. It's just possible to W. A. Wilson, wherever he might be, is tapping his toes to the old-time mountain music he put on the airwaves back in those early days when WOPI was truly "the Pioneer Voice of The Appalachians." ❖

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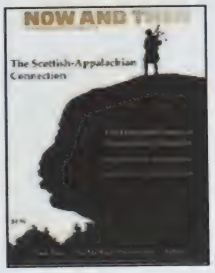

"The Scottish-Appalachian Connection" (vol. 9, no. 2)

The 2 Jacks:
Stanley Robertson & Ray Hicks

Barbara McDermitt

Ray Hicks, an Appalachian highlander, and Stanley Robertson, a Scottish traveler, come from different worlds, but these two master storytellers have much in common. They even tell a goodly number of the same stories, especially Jack tales. Since there has been no cross-pollination of their cultures for many generations I found the many parallels surprising when I interviewed these men.

Stanley Robertson from Aberdeenshire belongs to the traveling people of Scotland, an ancient race whose origins are still a mystery. In past centuries traveling people, or tinkers, as they used to be called, lived a gypsy-like existence outside mainstream society. Until the early 1900s, tinkers freely traveled in caravans or horse-drawn carts from campsite to campsite. They looked upon themselves as a separate race from non-traveling people. They were poor, eking out an existence by doing odd jobs for cotter families and crofters, begging, hawking their homemade wares or entertaining at the homes of wealthy country lairds. Through the generations they tried to maintain their own customs, superstitions and beliefs.

In recent times travelers have not had an easy time keeping their old ways. After World War II, the government started closing down their campsites and forcing families to move to inner-city council flats (the equivalent of American housing projects). A law requiring children to attend school was an especially bitter pill for the travelers. And travelers say that television has been a major reason for the breakdown of their culture.

Because of travelers' separative, nonconformist lifestyle, they have always been regarded with ridicule and suspicion by the settled community. "I don't want no dirty tink living next to me" was—and still is—a non-uncommon cry. Rather than face such continued adversity, young travelers are beginning to break away from their backgrounds and adopt ways of the non-traveler, of the "scaldie." But there remain travelers like Stanley Robertson and his grown children who still share a sense of group history and kinship and take pride in their roots.

Thanks to the tenacity of these traveler families, there still exists a vast number of wonder tales and legends. They learned traveler tales invented around campfires with other traveler families. They learned many of the international tales from country people. Whereas people in the towns despised the tinkers, isolated country people tolerated and even welcomed them as news-bringers, berry pickers, tinsmiths, fortune-tellers, musicians and storytellers. The arrival of tinkers signaled a chance for the shared entertainment of the swapping of tales and songs. Long after many of the country people lost the telling of tales and singing of ballads, travelers kept these traditions alive.

When Stanley Robertson was growing up, his family still traveled summers by horse and cart between the Deeside and Donside, meeting other traveler families at favorite campsites. The storytellers who most influenced Robertson were his parents, grandfather, Aunt Jeannie (also a famous ballad singer) and Great Aunt Maggie, a daughter of Auld Bill Stewart, considered the master storyteller and teller of Jack tales amongst Robertson's descendants.

Robertson remembers storytelling as holding a prominent place in his family's life. They told stories winter and summer as the circumstances, functions and even the tales themselves changed with the seasons.

In the winters, traveler families were isolated, often without enough money to buy food, much less coal, and storytelling became an escape for the children.

Robertson's mother told nursery stories and popular fairy tales from Grimm and Perrault to help the children forget their empty stomachs. She also told Bible stories, religious legends and moral tales. These were a way to counteract the miseries inflicted upon them by cruel scaldie neighbors and classmates. The older children made up stories to entertain the little ones, who would act them out. The children also told the stories they learned summers camping, and this was the way Robertson built up his repertoire and committed tales to memory. On the other hand, Robertson's father, always depressed when he wasn't camping, rarely told stories during the black winter months.

Summertime was different altogether. A campsite far from Aberdeen at the old drove road of Lumphanan was, according to Robertson, "a natural settin, richt for the stories, for the supernatural." Here all the things eerie and otherworldly came alive, and instead of the children (bairns) telling stories, "the summertime was mair a listening time for the bairns."

Robertson recalls how practically every evening families would gather around one of the campfires after supper, play musical instruments, sing songs and tell stories. At these times women might be asked to sing, but according to Robertson, men principally did the storytelling. They told of their day's work, bragged about their adventures of queer and ghostly happenings on the road or of their successes in cleverly outwitting non-travelers. And they told spell-binding memorates of relatives who had near escapes from banshees, the devil or the Burkers. (Burkers were the body snatchers in the 19th century who sometimes killed beggars and tinkers to sell their bodies to medical centers. Belief in the continued existence of body snatchers persisted until recently.) Mothers told Burker legends to discourage their children from venturing from camp and as a warning never to trust a scaldie.

Only the best storytellers attempted to tell the long wonder tales, mostly about Jack. These tales were a showcase for the narrators. Each one tried to outdo the others with his performing skill.

Though the evening was primarily for entertainment, it was also for the education of the children—especially the stories about Jack. Jack was the special hero of the travelers. Like themselves, Jack was an underdog who faced impossible obstacles and won out by his moral courage, faith, selflessness, self-reliance, wit and shrewdness—all important traits for traveler children to emulate.

One reason for the emphasis on instruction in the stories was that the travelers felt they had to offset the formal schooling inflicted upon their children. Travelers viewed scaldie education as teaching their children to measure success by how much money people earned or by their position in the social scale. These notions ran counter to traveler mores; therefore they used stories—particularly Jack tales—to teach their beliefs and values.

Robertson explains, "I enjoyed them because you can get something oot of them. And these stayed in yir mind perhaps much better than any of the other tales did. Usually Jack was stupid. But aye, by the end of the tale he was well respected in the community. And ye ken many travelers associated themsels wi Jack, as Jack. An as some o these travelers telt the story, they were the hero. They used tae see themsels as Jack. These Jack tales are very, very real tae ye. Somehow or other they've aaways been preserved among traveler people. I never even kent a traveling family that didnae have a Jack tale."

According to Robertson, not just the Jack tales, but all the different kinds of stories told by travelers help to explain and perpetuate their beliefs, hopes and dreams. They also serve to unite travelers as a group set apart from mainstream society. Consequently, Robertson passed his family tales onto his children as they were growing up, and he looks forward to doing the same for his grandchildren.

Ray Hicks especially remembers the Depression years in the 1930s when he was a boy growing up on Beech Mountain, N.C. Survival was all his family could hope for, and that just barely. Yet, according to Hicks, even in these dismal days people still found time for music and storytelling.

They told stories of ghosts, witches, the devil, Indian legends, Civil War tales, nursery tales, humorous and tall tales and international wonder and trickster tales—many of the same tales brought to the mountains by Scottish immigrants and other pioneers.

The tales that have persisted longest in the mountains and are still told by Hicks and other Highland storytellers are the Jack tales. These international tales have remained surprisingly intact, even though the settings and characters have become decidingly Appalachian in flavor. Jack, for example, is no longer a poor Scottish lad, but the son of mountain folk. The king and queen of the European tales, stripped of their royal costumes and palaces, are rich mountain farmers.

Jack has become someone with whom to identify. Frank Proffitt, Jr., Ray's nephew, says, "Jack in these stories, he was strongest, and so he survived. He was a kinda hero character. He would always overcome his obstacles, whatever challenges life throwed at him; he never gave in. I think that's what a lot of the pioneers used him for—moral lessons. Or maybe they didn't do it on purpose or thought about it all that much, but it turned out to be that way. Also, I think people tried to release some of their hardship, tried to make life a little bit easier to tell his stories. And it kinda gave them strength to carry on, how Jack could overcome his hardships. I guess I did kinda identify with Jack. I think Ray kinda identifies with Jack, too. How the hardships Jack went through, and we kindly growed up hard like Jack."

In Hick's childhood, storytelling was popular all year around. In the summer, especially after a harvesting or a house-rising or a family reunion, friends would gather with the family in the evening and tell stories. Winter was a different matter. In rural areas, bad weather often made social gatherings impossible. Then it would be just the immediate family that would sit before the fire telling tales.

As with the Scottish travelers, entertainment was only one purpose of the stories. Ghost stories, like the Burker stories, were warnings to keep children from wandering too far from home. Indian legends were also similar to the Burker stories in which storytellers could brag about forebears who managed to outwit Indians and escape capture or death by the skin of their teeth. And the Jack tales established a strong, positive hero figure for Appalachian children to follow.

While many people knew and told the shorter stories and legends, the long Jack tales and other international wonder tales were reserved mostly for those storytellers with superior memory and performance skill. Hicks learned all his Jack tales from his Grandfather Ben who was a popular storyteller on the Beech, known especially as a teller of Jack tales. He recognizes that the greatest source of Jack tales was his ancestor, Council Harmon.

Appalachian Jack faces some of the same challenges as his Scottish counterpart, but he is not quite the same fellow. Though both usually start out as underdogs, Appalachian Jack is often a trickster who succeeds by his own cunning and wit. He is tough, intelligent and practical, a survivor by nature. Jack can be helpful and generous to those who are deserving, but cruel to those who treat him badly or act in a stupid, selfish way. He sometimes meets up with giants and other magical adversaries (example: "Jack and the New Ground," where Jack manages to outwit an entire family of giants). He succeeds against his adversaries without magic. But the magical wonder tales also made it across the ocean and were popular on Beech Mountain and elsewhere in the Appalachians.

Traveler Jack is a kind-hearted lad, generally immature, who needs the advice of magic helpers as he journeys through otherworldly lands to face his ordeals. Traveler Jack is rarely a trickster; however, a few of the trickster tales types have cropped up in traveler repertoires.

Perhaps the kind of life the earlier settlers had to endure helped to fuel the popularity of the tough trickster hero. As with Robertson, Hicks acknowledges the lessons Jack tales teach children: if you want to survive and succeed in a tough world, you can't let other people push you around. Be fair, but be ready to give as good as you get.

In a trickster tale that survives in both Scotland and Appalachia "Unlucky and Lucky Jack," it is Unlucky Jack who was over-trusting and as a result nearly gets himself killed by a cruel king (rich farmer). He is too trusting, Hicks said. It took clever Lucky Jack to give the king the punishment he deserved.

"Everyone's out to hold up fer himself, but not to go fer cheatin. There ain't nobody goin to hold up fer you. That's what hurt me so bad and made me suffer as a kid. I didn't learn to hold up for myself till I was about 40 year old. Lucky Jack wins out by holding out fer himself."

Like Robertson, as Frank Proffit says, Hicks sees himself as Jack. He can remember when times got especially rough during the Depression, and his mother would be in despair because she had no food to feed the children. Hicks would tell her not to worry, then he would go out and find an odd job and bring in some money or food, just like Jack. "That's the way it was when I growed up hard like Jack. When you git like I tell it, I'm Jack. Jack can be in anybody."

But the entertainment value was not lost. Hicks says stories were the reward to children after a day's hard work. This was true when he was a boy and also when his own children were growing up.

"Younguns, they was all made to work. Had to be a-doin something that would help out to live. And their playin was nothing back then, only just when they'd tell these tales. (The younguns) would says, 'Oh, gosh, let's work. They're

goin ta tell us a Jack tale.'"

To Ray Hicks stories are important, and he is determined to preserve his heritage. He sees traditional storytellers dying off with no one from their own communities to replace them. Like many travelers, Hicks believes the coming of television destroyed the Appalachian storytelling tradition. He is pleased to see the revivalists taking an interest in learning the tales and helping to pass them on. Furthermore, he takes part regularly in the Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tenn., where Jack tales and other stories reach audiences comprised mostly of people not from Appalachia.

In Scotland, Stanley Robertson along with other travelers also feels the urgency of passing on his oral traditions. Besides telling his tales to other travelers, Robertson has started to tell stories to gatherings of non-travelers at festivals, universities, schools, libraries and his church. He uses Jack tales to teach spiritual and moral lessons, much as his mother did when he was a boy. Both he and Hicks want others to feel the magic they have felt from the stories which have been passed onto them. ❖

Barbara McDermitt and her husband Jack Yule, Scottish harp maker, started the Spanish Peaks International Celtic Music Festival in 2005. The festival brings together traditional musicians, singers, storytellers, and folklore scholars from Scotland, Ireland, Appalachia and Cape Breton, to celebrate all things Celtic. The September 2015 gathering will highlight the stories and songs of the Scottish and Irish traveling people, including Stanley Robertson.

"Sports in Appalachia" (vol. 9, no. 3)

From Sabbath Sin to Gridiron Evangelism:
Sports and Religion in Southern Appalachia

Robert J. Higgs

Something has happened to sports since the time of Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett. Sports have moved from simplicity, spontaneity and naturalness to complexity, organization and contrivance. Once regarded as sinful, especially on the Sabbath, sports in the 20th century have become symbols of faith and martial valor as well as major economic enterprises. This is true in Appalachia as elsewhere.

"Sporting was the lifeblood of the frontier," wrote historian Thomas D. Clark. Sports in early settlement days did not require extensive practice or training but often a display of considerable strength and skill. Among these, said Clark, were leapfrog (high over the head), foot races, wrestling and the throwing of shoulder stones, tomahawks, knives or cannonballs—sometimes, said another historian, David H. Fischer, at each other. The most exciting sports, said Clark (in *The Rampaging Frontier: Manners and Humors in the South and the Middle West*), were bear baiting, dog fighting and gander-pulling. The most controversial was the "rough and tumble," a free-for-all by two contestants (usually male but occasionally female) in which anything and everything was permitted, including biting, pulling hair and gouging out opponents' eyes with specially prepared nails.

In *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America*, Fischer cited statutes passed in Virginia against maiming in 1748 and in 1772 against gouging, biting, kicking or stomping. But there is the distinct possibility that observers greatly exaggerated their descriptions of "rough and tumble." For the most part impromptu boxing and wrestling matches seemed to end without permanent physical damage of even unkind feelings. In *The Overmountain Men*, Pat Alderman described frontier fights as festive occasions: "two men spoiling for a fight would strip to the waist and square off." They "would exchange blows until one . . . was down or would holler 'Take him off.' The two fighters would shake hands, go down to the river and wash up, and then empty a demijohn together."

This is not to argue that sporting competition in the region was not frequently brutal. It does suggest that the ferocity of accounts may have been exaggerated for dramatic or even political reasons, as seems the case with aristocratic observers, especially the British, who wanted to show how uncivilized some frontier folk were. Exaggeration was virtually a requirement for any kind of reporting of frontier sports as might be suspected from the following account reported by Clark: "Squirrel hunting was a grand sport—not that frontiersmen wanted the squirrels to eat. Frequent notices appeared in the early newspapers announcing squirrel hunts, and later these same papers announced the results. The *Kentucky Gazette* gave notice on May 17, 1796, that 'On Saturday last, the Hunters rendezvoused at Irvine's Lick and produced *Seven Thousand Nine Hundred and Forty-one* Squirrels killed by them in one day.'"

While exaggeration in the episode is obvious, the sense of waste, like that in Crockett's story of killing of 105 bears in less than a year, is disturbing, presaging as it does the conspicuous destruction of flora and fauna in our own day.

One cannot look either at religion or sports in the 19th century without considering the other. The profanation of the Sabbath in which frontier sports and rough amusements figured so prominently, along with drunkenness which had reached epidemic proportions, became a symbol of the evil the early churches sought to confront. All kinds of clever devices were employed for enforcing rules among the poor and illiterate, especially slaves. In *Fisher's River* (North Carolina) *Sketches and*

Characters (1859) by Hardin E. Taliaferro, a slave is welded to the river bank after wetting a line to fish on Sunday. The sentences for sporting violation of the Sabbath were always severe, often final and were not limited to punishment of slaves.

Peter Cartwright, the famous Methodist evangelist, was not exaggerating when he described Logan County, Ky., where his father had lived, as "Rogue's Harbor," for "refugees from all parts of the Union had fled there . . . to escape justice or punishment." Here "murderers, horse thieves, highway robbers, and counterfeiters . . . put all law at defiance." Sunday, said Cartwright, "was a day set apart for hunting, fishing, horse-racing, card-playing, balls, dances, and all kinds of jollity and mirth." H. L. Mencken and Thomas Babington Macaulay would say that it was the jollity and mirth that really irritated the evangelists, but in any event Logan County in the Cumberland country was widely regarded as the devil's own headquarters. It was here that Protestantism would strike with all the forces at its command.

The primary method of attack that the churches settled on was the camp meeting, which did not originate in America but which Americans perfected. The climate, the lack of buildings, and the sparseness of the population over a vast area made the camp meeting a natural means for spreading the gospel.

In England camp meetings were tame and well-scrubbed affairs, but in the United States the meetings were not nearly so subdued, decorous or formal. They started on Thursday and Friday and lasted until the following Tuesday. From as far as a hundred miles around, people would come, sometimes by the thousands, especially if the prospect of vigorous preaching was in store, which was usually the case. Those attending camped in covered wagons or under the trees on the grounds. Preaching and praying and singing and shouting could be heard at all hours of the day and night, excepting for a period before dawn. Not all the activity, however, was religious, as historian James Leyburn has observed: "Adolescents were frequently among the affected [by the religious frenzy]; it was therefore necessary to post guards to prevent young couples from wandering into the woods. Women threw themselves on the ground in suggestive postures, tore open their clothes, hugged and kissed everyone within reach. Those who carried out the victims were filled sometimes with a passion not strictly religious. It has been suggested that at the camp meetings more souls were begotten than saved.

"The stalls and store which were set up around the grounds frequently sold whiskey. It found ready purchasers, not only among the scoffing rowdies, but even among the faithful.

Friction occurred between the religious and non-religious elements, sometimes ending in a free-for-all fight. The Westerner, even when religious, was not docile, and did not consider seriously the admonition to 'turn the other cheek.'"

Here was a classic contest between the free, independent Celtic spirit and the stern Puritanism that forbade drinking, fighting, gambling and all sports on Sunday. It was like a collision of an immovable object with an unstoppable force. The result was not a clear-cut victory for either side, but a merging of interests in which the church eventually dropped all opposition to Sunday amusements, even violent sports, in exchange for tribute of those who loved to play.

The churches actually had no intention of stomping out sports; the goal was to bring them under control and even to use them as a means of proselytism. Manliness and the ability to adapt to unexpected challenges were widely admired, especially in ministers. Once when a young minister named Bascom saw all the men in his Kentucky congregation rise simultaneously to chase a bear that had just run by the meeting house, he himself joined in the chase and soon was ahead of all his people and not far behind the dogs. When the congregants killed the bear, he returned to the house with the others and gave an "uncommonly good sermon," reported William Brownlow Posey in *Development of Methodism*.

So taken were frontiersmen with competition that any preacher displaying a sporting spirit was apt to be warmly received. By mid-century, says Thomas D. Clark, "there were more enterprising and sporting clergymen on the frontier than those preachers who used homely terms to catch the attention of backwoods listeners." The Reverend Blaney was one of these as seen in the announcement for his services: "The reverend Mr. Blaney will preach next Sunday in Dempsey's Grove, at ten A.M. and at four o'clock P.M., Providence permitting. Between services the preacher will run his sorrel mare, Julia, against any nag that can be trotted out in this region for a purse of five hundred dollars!" The purse was made, and Julia, amid

deafening shouts, won the day. Not only did the congregation stay for the afternoon services, but some 200 joined the church: some from sincerity, some from the excitement of the day and some because the preacher was "a damned good fellow!" With ministers themselves now leading the assault on the Sabbath by engaging in horse racing, the Sabbath as a day of sanctity was endangered. Both the church and sinners were winning together.

Those writing about the Southern mountains in the early part of this century believed that more control and organization were still needed than what the churches had been able to provide. The children, said Horace Kephart in 1913, "play few games, but rather frisk about like young colts without aim or method."

"The young people of the mountains," wrote John C. Campbell in 1921, "as a whole do not know how to play." Even when they did play, he said, they wished passionately to win and were inclined to take whatever means necessary to reach a goal. What was missing, said Campbell, in addition to sportsmanship, was organization. "The Young Men's and the Young Women's Christian Associations might also find a special field for service in supplying and stimulating recreation . . . There must be definite fostering and supervision, and in places a traditional and religious opposition must be overcome, sympathetically and tactfully."

The YMCA had already invaded East Tennessee, a fact probably not lost on Campbell. The "Y" made its first appearance at the University of Tennessee in 1877 to assist in counteracting the general impression among the public that East Tennessee University, as it was called then, was not only nonsectarian but a "'godless' institution." Soon, it was said, the organization was exerting a "happy influence on the students," cultivating among them "a healthy moral tone," wrote Stanley J. Folmsbee in his history of the university.

Wherever the YMCA appeared on American campuses in the years between the Civil War and World War I, there was the rapid development of organized sports, a shift, in Roger Caillois' terms, from "turbulence to rules" or from unorganized play into structured competition (from *Man, Play, and Games*, published in 1961).

In the late 1870s the Knoxville, Tenn., campus also became militarized under the provisions of the Merrill Land Grant Act of 1862. According to Folmsbee, "the whole school was under military discipline similar to that in effect at West Point." In 1830 U.S. Congressional representative Davy Crockett had introduced a bill in the Congress to abolish West Point because of his fear of a "military nobility." Had he lived to a ripe old age, he would have seen the cloning of that august institution in his native East Tennessee.

The basic idea behind the drive for organization was the acculturation theory, which was designed to illustrate to the floods of refugees arriving into New York the values of team play, competition and capitalism. In the case of the YMCA, the goal was to extend those same values to the great unwashed in the hills and hinterland. The method of acculturation shifted from intellectual to athletic.

After the revolution the great Eastern colleges had sent out highly educated preachers to the heartland. Before 1825 Princeton virtually educated the South. Among the educators was Samuel Doak (Princeton 1775), founder of Washington College.

After the Civil War, when emphasis in the Eastern colleges began to shift to engineering and sports, the missionaries became football coaches with ties to the YMCA. In his 1974 University of Chicago dissertation, Robert Lester identified over 200 of these "Eastern College Evangelists of the Gridiron Gospel."

It is not correct to say that the cure of organized, militaristic sport was worse than the ailment of turbulent, often violent pastimes. However, the result of the new alliance of religion and sports presented a new set of problems from another direction with which we're still struggling today. The problems are well illustrated in the careers of two of America's greatest coaches, one who came from Appalachia and the other who came to it. The native was Fielding H. "Hurry Up" Yost (1871-1946) who was born in Fairview, W.Va., and who was himself one of "the Eastern College Evangelists of the Gridiron Gospel."

Yost attended Fairmont, W. Va., Normal School, Ohio Normal in Ada, and, attracted by lucrative possibilities in petroleum law, attended West Virginia University law school from which he graduated in 1897. Having played the newly developing game of football in Ohio, Yost took a coaching position at Ohio Wesleyan and then Nebraska (1898), Kansas (1899) and Stanford (1900), winning the conference championship at each school. In 1901 he went to the University of Michigan as head coach and remained there for the rest of his life. He was head coach until 1923

and again from 1925-1927, and he served as director of intercollegiate athletics from 1921-1941. His overall record at Michigan was 165-29-11. His teams remained undefeated eight times, and eight times won the Western Conference, commonly called the Big Ten. Most remarkable were his "point-a-minute" teams from 1901-1905 which averaged 49.8 points per game to 0.7 for their opponents in 55 games played.

Noted for running up the score on opponents, Yost's most lopsided victory came at the expense of his alma mater, West Virginia University, 130-0 in 1904. Thereafter Yost carried a yellowed clipping of the game in which West Virginia players spoke as if they had been invaded by Martians instead of Wolverines. With "gurgling satisfaction" Yost liked to read from the clipping which was itself a sort of Appalachian tall tale: "It is declared that every player on Yost's team weighed eight tons and had an average speed of 96 miles per hour. They breathed forth smoke and flames."

According to Larry Merchant in *. . . And Every Day You Take Another Bite*, it was Yost, rather than Vince Lombardi or Paul "Bear" Bryant, who gave us "winning is not the most important thing; it is the only thing." Think of it. This man, born in a log cabin in West Virginia, built at Ann Arbor "the largest collegiate athletic enterprise in America," according to the *Biographical Dictionary of America*, including the Yost Field House and Michigan Stadium, which became the largest in the nation.

Yost not only made the big score respectable, he sanctified it. The coach at Dobyns-Bennett High School in Kingsport, Tenn., in 1929, when Bobby Dodd was quarterback, was following Yost's example in beating Norton, Va., 128-0, a fact inscribed on a plaque in honor of Dodd at the Tri-Cities Airport. So was John Heisman following the lead, when in 1916, his Georgia Tech team beat little Cumberland University of Lebanon, Tenn., 220-0, possibly in revenge for a loss to Cumberland in baseball 22-0 the previous spring. Heisman, also a gridiron evangelist fond of drawing metaphors from war, threatened Cumberland with a lawsuit if it didn't show up for the football game. All Cumberland had to do when it gave up football in 1949, said one Tennessee wag, was to let the air out of the ball. In 1990 Cumberland took to the field again ready, no doubt, to do unto others, should the occasion ever present itself, what was notoriously done to it.

Running up the score in the attempt at national ranking has become part of the American sports scene, with church schools such as Brigham Young as guilty in this regard as state colleges. Wake Forest University has been trounced so often by "national powers" that some disgruntled alumni reportedly changed a road sign near Winston-Salam to read, "U. S. Interstate 85 – Wake Forest 0."

Yost often drew parallels between war and football and cited moral and religious reasons for his approach to coaching. He liked to re-fight the battle of Waterloo, and his acquaintances considered him an authority on Western front maneuvers in World War I. He preceded skull practices with a 20-minute lecture on military strategy, readying dispatches from the front and making predictions about the outcome with, it was said, uncanny success. He was also fond of lecturing on "football's four cornerstones of success," "brains, heart, courage, and character." "Yost claimed that his job gave him a 'pulpit' from which to preach his message of football as a 'sanctified instrument for the good,'" reported Robin Lester in his University of Chicago dissertation. Opposed to smoking, drinking and swearing, he was widely hailed as a moral force. Said Frank Murphy, Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, "Fielding H. Yost has done more to inculcate high ideals of clean, Christian living in the minds of Michigan students than any other one man." When Yost died, "his funeral service was an appropriate conclusion to his life." Boy Scouts formed a color guard, politicians and All-Americans served as pallbearers, and his fraternity brothers sang his favorite song, "The Sweetheart of Sigma Chi," said Lester.

In spite of Yost's success, he was controversial. Until 1921, as Lester pointed out, Yost worked only 10 weeks for which he was paid more than an annual salary of a full professor. During the rest of each year, Yost pursued a profitable career in business, seeking out natural resource deposits for development companies, selling oil and gas leases and supervising the construction of a hydroelectric plant in Tennessee from 1901 to 1914. Said Lester, "So lucrative were these ventures that he was loath to give them up when in 1906 the Intercollegiate Conference resolved that coaches in member schools should have fulltime academic appointments. Michigan stood by its coach, and after two years of debate left the conference, remaining out until 1917. The controversy continued, however, and in 1921 Yost's position at Michigan was finally legitimized with his appointment as director of

intercollegiate athletics."

There was also controversy about him as a coach. In his zeal to acquire quality athletes, he sometimes recruited players before they had graduated from high school. As early as 1903 President David Starr Jordan of Stanford denounced such practices. He identified Yost as the practitioner of the "kind of corruptions in athletics that colleges should eschew," reported Lester.

Another coach whose life illustrates the changes in athletics in the U. S. and in Appalachia was a Texan, Robert Reese Neyland Jr. As Yost had done for Michigan, Neyland put the University of Tennessee on the football map. Neyland's legacy was large—and lasting. He changed forever the nature of weekends in Tennessee.

Sam Rayburn appointed Neyland to the Military Academy in 1912. A natural athlete, he played both baseball and football. He was a teammate of Omar Bradley on Army's National Championship football team of 1914. He came to the University of Tennessee in 1925, and the following year became head coach, a position he held for 21 seasons over a 26-year period, with two interruptions for military service.

Once in charge at Tennessee, Neyland summoned two of his Army teammates, William H. Britton, who coached the ends, and Paul B. Parker, line coach. They were called "the three Musketeers," and all were imbued with a sense of destiny worthy of Templars on a crusade in a foreign land.

When Neyland met his team on Labor Day, 1926—the date is telling—he greeted his squad as follows: "Men, we will practice two and one-half hours each day. That's all. Each practice will be organized. We will know what we want to accomplish each day, and we will work full speed," wrote Bob Gilbert in *Neyland: The Gridiron General*. Neyland thereupon closed the practices to the public. He was not the only celebrated advocate of secret knightly training, but he was perhaps its most celebrated exemplar.

It was not just his record, always the measure of success in sports, that made Neyland a legend but his aggressive style of play and military manner of coaching. Coming from the Military Academy, where he had been an aide to Superintendent Douglas MacArthur, Neyland was more a gridiron general than a football evangelist like those coming out of the Eastern colleges. According to Gene McEver, Neyland's "greatest player," "Neyland ran his football team just like you'd run an Army. He was the first in command, and he didn't have much to do with the players." His method was precision and order, the same virtues admired by Fielding Yost and Amos Alonzo Stagg. "If you saw Tennessee run a play from its balanced-line single wing, you knew that play had been rehearsed a minimum of 500 times," said Clyde Bolton in *Unforgettable Days in Southern Football* (1974).

All who knew him felt that Neyland brought his military background to the game of football. It would be more correct to say that Neyland combined the language of religion and of war to come up with his 38 maxims which he regarded as "the football corollary to the Ten Commandments." Among these, according to Gilbert, were (1) "Thou shalt charge and block,"(2) "Thou shalt charge and fight," (12) "Football is a battle. Go out to fight and keep it up all afternoon," (16) "You can't fight like a man with less than 100 percent loyalty and college spirit."

The man most responsible for bringing Neyland to Tennessee was Nathan W. Dougherty, "Mr. Volunteer," who was himself a Hall of Fame guard for Tennessee in 1909 and later Dean of the School of Engineering. Said Dougherty to the young Army officer, "Even the score with Vanderbilt. Do something about the terrible series standings." As Russ Bebb remarked in his University of Tennessee football history, the good soldier carried out the order by going on to compile a record of 16-3-2 against Vanderbilt. Part of Neyland's appeal to common folk in Tennessee lay in his toppling from power the old aristocratic order in football represented by Vanderbilt and Sewanee.

What Yost was to offense, Neyland was to defense. His defensive record is legendary as the NCAA record book of 1989 demonstrates: (1) Most consecutive regular season shutouts (17 in 1938-40), (2) Most consecutive regular season quarters holding opponents scoreless (71 in 1938-40), (3) Fewest points allowed in a single season (none in 1939—shared with others), and (4) The last team to hold opposition scoreless during regular season.

Neyland's success can be measured in other ways as well. Neyland Stadium, which during every home game becomes in terms of population the fifth largest city in Tennessee, may be called "the House the General built." When Neyland first came to Tennessee, the stadium had 3,200 seats. Neyland oversaw expansion to a capacity of 46,390. Using Neyland's grand design, said Bob Gilbert,

athletic directors Bob Woodruff and Doug Dickey enlarged the stadium to accommodate 96,000 fans. Neyland's ultimate plan, a double-decked bowl, called for 103,000 seats, which would have made it the largest college stadium in the country, larger than the one at Ann Arbor. In addition to expanding the stadium, Neyland produced coaches in power football. Here, too, he achieved undreamed of results, relying primarily on local talent. Scores of those who played under Neyland became coaches.

Also like Yost, Neyland was involved in controversy centering on the apparent conflict between his duties as an Army engineer on the Tennessee River and those of coaching. The issues reached a head in 1933 when Franklin Roosevelt dismissed Neyland as Chattanooga District Engineer. The problem concerned alleged and complicated transfer of electric power by the Alabama Power Company and the Tennessee Power Company through Wilson Dam in Muscle Shoals, all under the auspices of the Army Engineers. Just as the University of Michigan stood by Yost, Major General Lytle Brown, head of the Army Engineers, defended Neyland and his subordinates.

No charges were brought, says Gilbert, but Neyland, born a Texas Democrat, never forgot how he was treated by the New Deal. After his retirement from the Army as a brigadier general after World War II, he denounced in the strongest language Roosevelt and the New Deal, opposing strenuously "social concepts which put the federal government in business competition with private industry."

Yost and Neyland demonstrated, on the one hand, that Appalachians can coach with the best, and, on the other, play with the best. However one feels about the role of these legends in the development of college football, their brilliance and versatility must be acknowledged. Yet the careers of these two legendary coaches raise several questions when we compare modern sports in the region with those of the 19th century: Were Yost and Neyland the last of the all-round men who tried to combine professional interests or obligations outside of football with their jobs as head coaches? Did they with their emphasis upon precision and machine-like efficiency ironically make football so demanding in the United States that coaches and, *more important*, players themselves have little time left for other things, including studies and preparation for a career outside of sports? To what extent is the situation paralleled in Appalachia? Are we producing great scholars and scientists on the same scale as we are coaches and athletes? Is running up the score for ranking the modern equivalent of the excessive killing of game for record in the 19th century? Is "winning-is-the-only-thing" a modem version of the rough and tumble in which the goal was to win by any means available? What has happened to the simple fun of play as sports, especially football, have been progressively imbued with military and religious seriousness?

In responding to these questions, we might remember an alternative to Yost's "winning is the only thing," and that is the cliché of Grantland Rice, a native Tennessean, that expresses an entirely opposite view: "And when the one great scorer comes to mark against your name / He says not that you won or lost, but how you played the game." This may be read in the way that Rice probably intended, as an affirmation of traditional faith, and it may be viewed less theologically as a common sense view of competition.

According to George Leonard, blacks in Buffalo expressed something of Rice's philosophy when they asked after a Bills game not whether the Bills won or lost but this: "Did O.J. dance?" That is always the final question, if not the first, not what was the score but "how was the dance?"

The direction that sports in Appalachia will take in the future will depend in large measure on the questions we ask. Only by looking both at the old ways and the new can we seek the best. Our alternatives, after all, are not between the rough and tumble on the one hand or football as war and religion on the other. ❖

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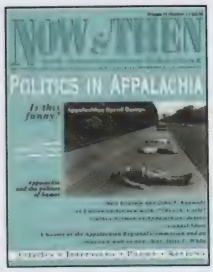

"Politics in Appalachia" (vol. 11, no. 1)

An "Other" Consciousness

Gurney Norman

Until I went away to college at age 18, I had lived all my life in the coalfields of Eastern Kentucky and Southwest Virginia.

My mother's people in Lee County, Va., were miners and hillside farmers. My father's people in Perry County, Ky., were coal camp folks.

During the World War II years, with my father in the Army and my mother in a mental hospital, my older brother Jerry and my younger sister Gwynne and I divided our time between the houses of our grandparents on each side; by war's end both households had come to feel like natural homes to us.

Among our folks in Virginia, we lived very much in the old-time mountain way. Grandma and Granddad raised nearly all the food we ate except for store necessities such as salt and coffee. In the summertime we bought ice in 50 pound blocks at the ice house in Pennington Gap and, having no car, hauled it home in a taxi after church on Sundays. We kept the ice in the cellar, wrapped in burlap bags, with the milk and butter sitting next to it. All through the war years Granddad worked regularly at the mines. In his spare time he helped Grandma with the farm work which included milking two cows twice a day and churning butter by hand. In the summers Grandma canned scores of quart and half-gallon jars of vegetables she had raised and fruit she had cultivated. They kept a sizable flock of chickens for eggs and meat. Every Saturday afternoon Grandma would wring the necks of two or three big fryers and skin them in preparation for Sunday dinner. In late summer we cut the corn in the field, one stalk at a time by hand, and dried the fodder shocks. We dug potatoes and stored them in holes in the ground beneath some of the shocks to shield them from the rain. In the fall Grandma and Granddad slaughtered one or two big hogs, made sausage, rendered lard, and smoked the hams. Grandma and Granddad had built their house and barn and outbuildings by hand, without power tools of any kind. Their house was heated by coal fires in grates in two rooms and a coal-burning cook stove in the kitchen.

The kitchen had running water, gravity-fed from a cistern Granddad and his oldest sons had dug by hand, but there was no other indoor plumbing until after the war.

We kids were mostly spectators of the hard work that seemed to go on all around us without end, although we had serious chores to do. My own favorite chore was to walk out through the woods to the pasture in the mornings and evenings and drive in the cows for milking. We kids were expected to bring in coal and kindling at night for the morning fires and carry out the ashes. We helped Grandma pick berries, string beans, shell peas, hoe corn, thin corn, pick corn, shuck corn, and shell corn for the chickens. We peeled apples, pears, peaches, and tomatoes, and chopped up cabbage for kraut and chow-chow. We helped with the housework, washed dishes, waxed floors, and always, every Monday without fail, worked alongside Grandma on the all-day job of getting out the family wash. Once a year we helped Grandma make lye soap in a big iron kettle outside the wash house. Some years, when the peach orchard in the new ground was productive, we made big vats of peach butter in the same iron kettle. On leisurely days we watched Grandma and Granddad do such things as bottom chairs with bark they had stripped from trees. Our evening recreation was pitching horseshoes, playing hide 'n' seek, and, indoors, playing checkers and listening to the big floor model radio in the kitchen.

Life among our father's people in Allais coal camp at the edge of Hazard, Ky., was on an industrial-village model, with the big company commissary at the center

of community activity. My father's father, Gurney W. Norman, or G.W. as most people called him (I am Gurney M.) had moved his family to Allais in 1916 to build and then manage the commissary for Columbus Mining Company for the next 31 years. My father Howard grew up in Allais. As a young husband and father he worked for the company as a miner, on the tipple and sometimes underground. Around us all day, every working day, was the roar of the tipple as it processed the coal before dropping it into the great gons below, filling them one by one to make a train. Coal camp play for us boys included such things as placing nails and pennies on the railroad track to have them flattened beneath the wheels of the steam engines. As often as not, we'd leap on the moving train as it went by, ride it down the tracks a few hundred yards, then leap off before the train got going *too* fast. Then we'd walk back to our starting place and collect our flattened nails and pennies as if they were valuable treasures. Near the commissary was Dr. Ray's office, a frame house not unlike the scores of frame houses that lined Allais hollow. More than once I watched wide-eyed as miners, mangled and bloody from an underground rock fall or some accident involving dynamite or machinery, were carried out of the hollow on stretchers to Dr. Ray's office, sometimes too late for the doctor to do them any good.

Half a century later, such images of daily life in my childhood years seem exotic even to me. But at the time, in the late 1930s and early 1940s, our combined farm-and-mining camp lives seemed utterly ordinary as far as we kids were concerned. It couldn't possibly have occurred to any of us that someone, somewhere, might have a sociological analysis of our way of life of a label to pin on our family. We didn't think of ourselves as "mountain people," or "hillbillies" or "Appalachians" although I knew about hillbillies. Snuffy Smith and Lil'Abner and Ma 'n' Pa Kettle, whose adventures we followed with great pleasure in the comic strips and movies, were hillbillies. As far as I was concerned, I and the people around me were pure-D Americans and damned patriotic, too, especially during the war years, with my father in the Army Air Corps in Texas and all four of my mother's brothers in danger in the combat zones of Europe and the Pacific.

At either of my grandparents' houses I was an eager child-percipient in the war effort. I collected scrap iron from the neighbors, rode on floats in patriotic parades, and sang Gene Autry songs to small crowds of neighbors at public war-bond rallies. My Grandfather Norman, whom we kids called "Uncle G," had a world atlas that he and I read together. We studied maps and discussed campaigns we heard about on the radio or saw in the newsreels at the movies. Studying the atlas was a form of traveling in the mind; I felt I had been to the places described in that book. I was only six in 1943, and seven in 1944 but I knew the difference between the Eastern Front and the Western Front, and the names of islands in the Pacific where the great battles were being fought. I knew that General MacArthur had said he would return to the Philippines. I knew that Blood 'n' Guts Patton had slapped an enlisted man. I knew that my four uncles were in the thick of it. The atlas and the radio and the movies and the somber adult talk I overheard made me feel very much a participant in the enormous national and global events of those incredible days.

Everybody had relatives working in defense plants in the industrial cities. When they came home on visits, they brought with them, in addition to more money than most families had ever seen, a whole new attitude toward, and knowledge of, the great world beyond the rural counties they had left. When my two aunts came home from Oak Ridge for the weekend, we kids always got to go to the movies in town. The movies were about cowboys, soldiers, war, and what I will term "sophisticated urban people": men who wore suits and ties and topcoats and hats, and women who wore evening gowns and gloves that went all the way to their elbows. They were exotic people who used cigarette holders when they smoked and went dancing at the Stork Club every evening of their lives. In my young mind it seemed that I, too, might quite soon find myself at the Stork Club wearing a tux and dancing suavely with a beautiful lady in an evening gown. Perhaps I would be a spy in disguise, getting ready to fly "overseas" and drop by parachute "behind enemy lines" to organize the "grillers" as we called French resistance fighters and the Russian partisan guerrillas. When America won the war (as we Americans assumed we had; noble as the Russian people were shown to be in the movies, it wasn't generally thought that they had actually done very much to whip the "Notzies"), the national euphoria was as great in Pennington Gap and Hazard as it was in New York or Los Angeles. I certainly had no psychic split regarding *my* identity in 1945.

I carried this pure reconciliation of local and national identity inside me well into my college years,

although certain experiences in my teenage years began to give me clues that our national life was a good deal more complicated than I had understood. When my brother Jerry was killed in a car wreck at the age of 18, (I was 16, my sister Gwynne 15), the insurance company paid our family $5,000. Our family's lawyer, who paid himself $1,200 of the $5,000, explained that the settlement was only $5,000 by saying that if Jerry had been a Louisville boy instead of a Hazard boy, he would have been worth $10,000. He actually used the word "worth." This registered in my mind in a way I did not forget, but even this sharp encounter with the national class structure did not disrupt my national identity nor interfere with my love of our national movies and national radio and the national or "popular" music of the day.

By the late 1940s I was old enough to sit in the drugstore and drink Cokes and milkshakes by myself. The drugstore jukebox was a good place to hear Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra and Vaughn Monroe and the Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman, and Tommy Dorsey bands. As I toiled through my early teenage years in the first half of the 1950s the voices of Rosemary Clooney, Kay Starr, Jo Stafford, Teresa Brewer, Patti Page, Tony Bennett, Nat King Cole, Tony Martin, Perry Como, the McGuire Sisters, the Ames Brothers, and the Hilltoppers came to me every day at 5 p.m. on the *Daily Hit Parade*, a 15-minute broadcast from WCKY in Cincinnati. For years, it was unthinkable that I would miss even one of these broadcasts. In the late 1950s I was sustained in my progress through the University of Kentucky by the likes of Gale Storm, Pat Boone, Dean Martin, Andy Williams, Doris Day, the Four Aces, the Four Freshmen, the Four Tops, the Brothers Four, the Diamonds, the Platters and the Crickets. As a fair-haired, crew-cut journalism major who, when not in ROTC uniform, wore white loafers on an as-yet unintegrated semi-Southern campus, there was certainly no rock 'n' roll on *my* radio. Rock 'n' rollers weren't communists, exactly, but they certainly tended to upset the established order of things. Even if the established order of things valued Louisville boys twice as much as Hazard boys, I still knew that it was my duty to walk tall as I crossed the campus in my ROTC uniform. Like all draft-age American males in those days of universal military training, I knew that at some time in my early 20s I would serve in the armed forces of my country. It was not an idea I resisted. On a deep personal level I wanted to be a soldier as my father and my uncles before me had been. With my scrap iron piles and war bond drives I had helped defeat fascism in the 1940s. Communism looked to be a tougher opponent because communists were hard to see. Anybody might be one.

For the government to do what it had to do to maintain the national consciousness in eternal vigilance against all enemies, foreign and domestic, was certainly a legitimate priority as far as I was concerned.

So when did I have my big shock of recognition that, instead of (or at least in addition to) being a stalwart all-American mainstream person, I was some sort of "other" person, too? I can tell you exactly. Paul on the road to Damascus did not have a more sudden and vivid moment of recognition than I did about 4 p.m. one day while browsing in a record store in Palo Alto, Calif., soon after enrolling in the graduate writing program at Stanford University in the fall of 1960. At about the time of the second Kennedy-Nixon debate in October, I went to the store to get myself a Bill Monroe record, not because I had suddenly developed a taste for that tacky Bluegrass music but because, to my amazement, I had discovered in two months in Palo Alto that Bill Monroe was a major icon among the artsy-liberal-intellectual-literary university people whose good opinion I sought. This was in the seed time days of the Great Folk Music Revival in America, remember, when Bill Monroe was a primary herald for the emerging hootenanny set.

I didn't buy a Monroe album that day because, in looking for one, I came across the Folkways album called *Mountain Music of Kentucky*, the one with the picture of Roscoe Holcomb on the cover holding his banjo and looking me in the eye with a steady gaze. To my astonishment, I read in the liner notes that Roscoe and most of the other singers and players on the record were from Perry County, Ky., my very homeplace which I had left only eight or nine weeks before in my 1951 maroon eight-cylinder Ford that had only two forward gears. (First, or "low" gear as it was called in those days, had disappeared from my Ford's transmission in a grinding roar in front of the courthouse on Main Street in Hazard precisely as I was setting out for California. I was undaunted and set forth anyway. I still had two gears. When you are 23, two gears are quite enough to get to California on. When you are 23, you assume that you and your car both are invulnerable and that Fate is always on your side.)

Fate carried me to Palo Alto in 1960 and led me to the Roscoe Holcomb record. The very next year, Fate carried me straight

back to California, to Fort Ord this time, where I served my nation for two years disguised as an infantry lieutenant. One morning in 1962, I read in the *San Francisco Chronicle* that Roscoe Holcomb was performing in a folk music festival in Berkeley that very afternoon. Asking no one's permission to leave my post, I drove the hundred miles and went to the festival and heard Rossie perform. At intermission, before Rossie's second set, I went backstage to say hello to my fellow Perry Countian. Rossie seemed glad to see me. He asked me to hold his banjo while he tuned his guitar. There I stood, in Berkeley, Calif., Lieutenant Norman of Hazard, Ky., 24-years old, absent without leave from the U.S. Army, holding the very banjo I had been listening to for over a year on my *Mountain Music of Kentucky* record. Fate did indeed seem to be guiding me along a Way I was meant to travel.

In the early fall of 1963, just before I left Fort Ord and the Army to return to Kentucky, I went to another big folk music festival at the fairgrounds in Monterey, and again Roscoe Holcomb was performing, this time alongside Doc Watson and a skinny 19-year old kid named Bob Dylan. I didn't go backstage to see Rossie this time. I intended to after his set. But before I could, the whole tenor of the festival was transformed when the master of ceremonies came to the microphone, and, to a hushed crowd of several thousand, announced that a bomb had gone off in a Negro church in Birmingham, Ala., and that children had been killed.

But I did go see Rossie at his home at Daisy, there in Perry County, when I returned to Hazard in early 1964 to work as a reporter for the *Hazard Herald* newspaper. Rossie had made a new record, and I wanted to write a story about it. I wanted to call attention to the record, but I was also curious to learn how a singer and musician as nationally famous as Roscoe Holcomb could be so little known in his own home county. What cultural forces accounted for that? Why were California festival-goers eager to hear the old-time mountain music that the local people seemed to spurn? Rossie had been playing there in Perry County as I was growing up just a few years before. Why, as a teenager, had I listened to Patti Page sing "Doggie In the Window" instead of Roscoe sing "Little Birdie?" By 1964 my personal list of questions about the relationship of our regional life in the Kentucky mountains to the mass culture of the nation, of which we proudly are a part, was long indeed.

In 1964 there was certainly no shortage of opportunities for a young newspaperman in Perry County, Ky., to pursue his curiosity about such questions. About the time I went to visit Roscoe at his home (which, incidentally, was not long after Bob Dylan had made a pilgrimage to Daisy to pay homage to Rossie), 200 college students organized by Students for a Democratic Society, SDS, came from all across the nation to attend a weekend conference on poverty at my father's old union hall at Allais. At about this same time, a group of unemployed Perry County coal miners, whose own national union had recently canceled their medical coverage, went to Washington to seek redress by picketing the White House.

Lyndon Johnson had been President two months when I returned to Hazard. Through the War on Poverty, his impact on Perry County and Eastern Kentucky was immediate and enormous. In 1964 the largest part of my job as reporter was to try to make sense of the new federal presence in my home county and the consequent attention of the national and international media that sought to describe this "other" America to the "nation" and the world. In addition to ongoing stories and programs about the mountain region in U.S. media in 1964 and 1965, writers and television journalists from England, Canada, Poland, Romania, West Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union all came to Eastern Kentucky looking for stories. Since the local newspaper office was the first stop for visiting journalists, I met a lot of these folks, even put some of them up at my house when the hotels were full. We'd sit up and talk all night sometimes. I remember being surprised in 1964 by the degree of interest these foreign journalists had in the presence of American military advisors in Vietnam. What's the big deal there? I wondered.

Wasn't President Johnson campaigning for reelection on the slogan, "We seek no wider war?" I was even more surprised by their interest in my home town and county and region. Sometimes I'd play my *Mountain Music of Kentucky* record for my foreign guests. Sometimes I'd drive them around the county, take a whole day to cruise along obscure narrow roads that I had been passing by all my life but had never explored. These were always intense experiences for me because, in addition to seeing much of my own local world for the first time, I was simultaneously seeing it through European eyes.

Every two or three weeks, when the intensity of life in Perry County became too great, I would

leave Hazard and drive in my Volkswagen across Pine Mountain and Black Mountain to Lee County, Va., where Grandma and Grandad and my mother and my Uncle Holly still lived. As interesting as life had become for me in the general thick of things unfolding in Kentucky, I remember my weekends at Grandma's and Grandad's as my truly best times in those years. There they still were, Grandma in her late 70s, Grandad up in his 80s, and my mother, out of the hospital now, and my aunts and uncles, and my sister and her husband and children who came home on frequent weekends the same as me, the same as always. Sometimes there'd be eight or 10 of us home for the weekend at once. We would talk about the news some, the nation and the world. But mostly our talk was about the family itself, about each other, a lot of it sweet storytelling, remembering the old days. ❖

Gurney Norman is the author of *Divine Right's Trip*, a novel first published in *The Last Whole Earth Catalog* in 1970. One of the stories in his collection *Kinfolks*, has been turned into a film, *Fat Monroe*. Norman teaches creative writing at the University of Kentucky.

"Religion in Appalachia" (vol. 13, no. 3)

Contradiction, Compromise, & Commitment:
The Jews of Beckley, West Virginia

Deborah Weiner & Maryanne Reed

Rabbi Isadore Wein looked out on a crowded sanctuary at the Jewish New Year services at Temple Beth El in Beckley, W.Va., this past September. From 82-year-old Sidney Fink, the only remaining founder of the temple, to two-year-old Aaron Sopher, a fourth generation Beckley Jew, the entire Jewish population of Beckley was gathered.

The Rabbi could remember a time, not long ago, when the number of Jewish families in town had dropped so low that the future of the Jewish community looked bleak. Today, Temple Beth El has the feeling of "a youthful and vibrant community," according to young Aaron's uncle, 38-year-old Tom Sopher.

Beckley's Jewish population is still much too small, however, to account for the 100 or so people who filled the temple that night. So who were the rest of the folks in the crowd?

Well, there was a fundamentalist Christian couple from the nearby hamlet of Sophia. And there was an ex-governor of West Virginia. In fact, probably a third of the crowd was not Jewish. They came because they were curious or because they had friends in the congregation or because Rabbi Wein's sermons, which draw upon Jewish tradition but deal with universal themes, have been known to make listeners weep.

But the story of that Rosh Hashanah gathering is more than the story of a religious minority's success in forging good relations with the surrounding Christian majority. It's the story of a small Jewish community's determination to maintain its religious traditions through a combination of stubborn persistence and flexible adaptation.

Maintaining a Tradition

Present-day descendants of the first Beckley Jews feel a deep connection to the past that carries with it a strong desire to transmit their Jewish heritage to future generations. As Tom Sopher puts it, "I was raised Jewish, and my dad was raised Jewish, and his father was raised Jewish. It would be a shame if, in the 1990s, all of a sudden we decided we would not be Jews. I don't want to be the one to break the tradition of Judaism in my family."

Jews arrived in Central and Southern Appalachia shortly after the opening of the coalfields around the turn of the century. Mostly emigrants from the Russian Empire, they came as peddlers, traversing the region on foot or with horse and wagon, selling their wares in the coal camps and small towns that sprang up throughout the area. They soon began to settle as merchants and shopkeepers in county seats and other centers of the booming coal economy.

In Southern West Virginia, small Jewish communities thrived in towns such as Beckley, Williamson, Logan, and Welch until the mid-1950s, when the combination of the sinking coal economy and changing consumer patterns led to their decline. In recent years, many Appalachian Jewish communities have all but died out, and the fate of many others hangs in the balance.

In the early years, Beckley was known as "the utopia for business," according to Manuel Pickus, whose uncles opened a department store in town in 1911. As the Jews of Beckley prospered, they started raising families and soon turned to the task of organizing themselves as a religious community. Fittingly, their first communal activities demonstrated their own concern with generational continuity. In 1921, they organized a religious school for one dozen or so Jewish children; it was taught by male and female community members in private homes.

The first high holiday services were held that same year in honor of Pickus' widowed grandmother, who had just arrived from Russia to live with her sons. History does not record whether two peculiar circumstances

surrounding this service bothered the traditional, devoutly Orthodox Sana Moskovitch Pickus: A student rabbi from the liberal Reform branch of Judaism conducted the service—and it was held in a Presbyterian Church because the Jewish congregation did not yet have the means to acquire a building of its own.

Being Jewish in Beckley has never been easy. Far from the major metropolitan centers of American Judaism, lacking in resources because of its small size, forced to meld into one congregation people from a variety of Jewish backgrounds and beliefs, the Beckley Jewish community has been forged out of compromise, contradiction, and commitment. Nathan Berman—a scrap dealer who, according to Rabbi Wein, erected the Temple Beth El building in 1935 "almost single-handedly with used materials"—exemplified this commitment, as does Rabbi Wein himself.

A Rabbi & A Pharmacist

In fact, the story of the 83-year-old rabbi's tenure at Temple Beth El tells a lot about the character of the Beckley congregation. Wein came to Beckley in 1940 from New Jersey, having met and fallen in love with Jean Abrams, a local Jewish woman whose father was in the clothing business. Although trained as a rabbi, he had rejected a career in the rabbinate to become a pharmacist. At the time he arrived in town, according to Wein, the congregation "could not yet afford a rabbi, so I said in the interim, I will serve as your rabbi. And 56 years later, I'm still here."

Through the years, paid rabbis have come and gone, with Wein filling in on a volunteer basis whenever necessary, all the while running his father-in-law's clothing business and working as a pharmacist. He has conducted weddings and funerals for dozens of Beckley Jews and presided over the religious training of four generations of children. Manuel Pickus, now 65, was Wein's first bar mitzvah student. Tom Sopher remembers studying for his bar mitzvah at the pharmacy where Wein worked, learning Hebrew prayers from an old 78 album and sitting behind one counter reciting out loud as Wein filled pharmaceutical orders from another counter. He had to stop from time to time so Wein could serve his customers.

After his then four-year-old son recovered from a life-threatening illness in the 1950s, Wein experienced a renewed dedication to his faith. At that time, he says, "I made a pledge that Temple Beth El would never close. Temple Beth El is never going to close as long as I live." At one time, Wein remembers, for the high holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, "we didn't have enough seats. People were standing in the aisles." At other times, "we had to go out and collect money every month to pay the rabbi. That's how bad it was."

Since the late 1950s, the Jewish population has declined sharply. From a peak of 72 families after World War II, it dropped to just eight families in the 1980s. The congregation has not had a paid rabbi for decades. According to Sopher, Wein "kept Temple Beth El going when no one was even there." But recently, the local economy has started to diversify, and the Jewish population appears to be on the rebound, doubling to 16 families, making both Sopher and Wein hopeful for the future.

Everyone Counts

The congregation's fluctuating size is only one challenge its members have faced. The Jewish immigrants to Beckley "came from homes which were originally and strongly Orthodox," according to a congregational history. Orthodox Judaism encompasses an entire way of life, which includes dietary laws, various other rituals, and a strict observance of the Sabbath which prohibits all work on Saturday. But, declares Wein, "It's impossible to practice Orthodoxy in a community like Beckley." From the beginning, adaptations had to be made—such as bringing in the Reform student rabbi for the first high holiday services. The Reform branch of Judaism, a more liberal version of the religion that makes concessions to modem life, sends student rabbis out to isolated Jewish communities across America.

Pickus remembers that "my family was as Orthodox as they could be while they were living in Beckley, W.Va." Because so much of Jewish practice centers on the home, women often played a key role in maintaining ritual. Jean Abrams Wein, who grew up in a nearby coal camp before moving to Beckley as a teenager, recalls that "my mother was very religious—not my father." Esther Abrams kept the traditional Jewish Sabbath and tried to maintain a strictly kosher home under extremely difficult circumstances. Some local grocery stores stocked a few Jewish food items, but Beckley Jews often traveled the 60 miles to Charleston or the 350 miles to Baltimore to purchase holiday foods. Kosher meats packed in dry

ice were shipped in from Baltimore or Cincinnati but often spoiled along the way.

Saturday, when the coal miners were paid, was the busiest shopping day of the week, so strict Sabbath observance was out of the question for Jewish merchants. Eventually, even the most religious Jews began to adapt, and by the mid-1950s, Beckley Jews "observed few or none of the Orthodox customs," according to the congregational history.

But as Rabbi Wein points out, whether Orthodox or Reform, Jews "all believe in the same precepts. They don't change." Gradually abandoning Orthodox rituals, the Jewish community instead based its religious life around the family, Jewish education for the young, the celebration of Jewish holidays, and the communal activities of the temple. Says Pickus, "A great deal of what we did was Jewish: family, food, religious holidays. A lot of my religious education was in the home." All the Jewish boys were expected to undergo a bar mitzvah ceremony at age 13, and this tradition carries on today for both boys and girls (for whom the term is bat mitzvah).

Communal life centers around the temple. The current Sunday school teacher, former Beckley resident Ami Lamborn, comes in from Charleston once a month to teach around 10 children. A student rabbi from Cincinnati also continues to visit once a month to conduct services and Sunday school, with Rabbi Wein taking over for the high holiday services.

Sopher wryly notes that "one of the biggest challenges is getting people to come to temple on a Friday night" when competition from local football games and other social events is particularly fierce. Yet because of the congregation's small size, members feel an attachment to the temple that could well exceed the feeling in large city congregations, where the temples are huge but are generally full only on holidays. In Beckley, a higher percentage of the congregation participates regularly—and if they don't attend, their absence is felt. "Everyone counts," says Sopher. "They count a lot." With no paid staff, the temple's congregation relies on members to take care of everything from mowing the lawn to bookkeeping. Says Sopher, "Every one of us feels that Temple Beth El is our temple. We all pitch in. We all try to make it work."

Intermarriage

Perhaps the most striking example of the way the Beckley congregation has turned potential adversity into a benefit for the community is its response to intermarriage. Marriage to non-Jews has been a common occurrence for three generations of Beckley Jews. But unlike most of organized American Jewry, which views intermarriage as a threat to Jewish survival, Rabbi Wein and Temple Beth El welcome intermarried families and believe they have strengthened the congregation.

Wein performed his first intermarriage wedding ceremony 40 years ago at a time when it was all but unheard of for rabbis to sanction such unions. He takes the radical position that Jewish survival is enhanced, not harmed, by intermarriage. "To refuse to accept intermarriage, you're turning two families away from Judaism. The door swings both ways." In Beckley, intermarried couples consist mostly of Jewish men and non-Jewish women, several of whom play a prominent role in the temple, prompting Wein to observe that "the women who come into Judaism are much better observers of Judaism than our Jewish girls."

Ironically, women continue to take the lead in upholding Jewishness, just as they did in Esther Abrams' time—but for the past couple generations, these women have not been born Jews. Thirty-one-year-old Gina Stone, daughter of a coal miner, grew up as a Presbyterian and married a Jew who moved to Beckley from New York. Several years ago, she decided that her daughter "needed to grow up with religion, and that whatever we decided, we needed to do it together as a family." She knew that even though her husband had been away from the temple for many years, Judaism was important to him. At her urging, the three of them started going to temple. ''The more I observed the Jewish traditions, the more it felt right," says Stone. She eventually converted to Judaism, her daughter is preparing for her bat mitzvah, and all three participate fully in the life of the temple. Stone followed a path pioneered by Torn Sopher's mother, also a coal miner's daughter. According to her son, Mary Jo Sopher was "real influential in making us go to temple and be Jews. She said, 'They're either going to be Jews, or we're going to go to church.' We decided that we would go to temple."

Mary Jo Sopher says that her determination to instill religious values in her children led her to study Judaism, and although she never formally converted, she made it part of her own and her family's life. "I have done a lot of reading. I feel like Temple Beth El is my temple." Growing up in a coal camp,

she says, "I never had met any Jewish people." But the Beckley Jewish community "accepted me immediately," and she soon became one of its most active members, serving for a time as president of the Temple Sisterhood. She also oversaw her sons' religious education. "I insisted that they have a bar mitzvah. I couldn't teach them the Hebrew, but I could have them to read the English."

Tom Sopher's own religious commitment shows that children of intermarried couples can be as dedicated to Judaism as people whose parents were both ethnically Jewish—bearing out Wein's contention that "we don't *lose* the children. We *gain*." Sopher is doing his best to pass Jewish tradition on to his own children, even though he himself is married to a non-Jew. His son became a bar mitzvah recently, and his daughter is currently studying for her bat mitzvah. "I saw an importance for Judaism in my life. Like my mother, I wanted to see my kids have some kind of religious background." He asserts that "my kids feel real strong about being Jews." Wein argues that an individual's commitment to Judaism stems from "exposure to temple, to Sunday school, to a little bit of history. That's what makes people Jewish." He points out that "Moses was not married to a Jewess." Being Jewish is a way of life, he concludes, not a matter of birth. In other words, "You don't have to be Jewish to be Jewish."

The Future

What with Wein's unconventional leadership and the commitment of its members, the Beckley congregation has strengths that belie its small numbers. This strength was evident at a rededication ceremony honoring the temple's 60th birthday this past October, as an overflow crowd of some 200 people—congregation members, former members who have moved away, and friends from the larger Beckley community—gathered to pay tribute to the Jewish community's heritage and persistence.

As demographic trends cause small Jewish congregations to disappear from small towns across America, it is impossible to say how long Temple Beth El will survive. It will no doubt continue to need an influx of Jews from outside the area. But the welcoming nature of its members and their commitment to passing on the tradition seem to bode well for the future. ❖

Deborah R. Weiner is author of the book *Coalfield Jews: An Appalachian History*, published by the University of Illinois Press.

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"Religion in Appalachia" (vol. 13, no. 3)

The Gift of Tongues

Robert Morgan

When I was growing up in a tiny North Carolina mountain community, we still felt the aftershocks of a religious quarrel that went back to the previous century. There had been a feud at the church, stretching back almost to Confederate times, between the Old Regular Baptists and the Missionary Baptists.

The Old Regulars, or Hard-shells, believed it a sin to have musical instruments in church. They believed in predestination and thought it futile to try to win converts among the lost. The Missionary Baptists understood their primary mission to be saving souls, and they considered music and musical instruments important tools of their ministry. The argument became a kind of family quarrel, passed down through the generations, and each faction tried at least once to expel the other from membership. My great-grandfather Pace had given land for the church, but once even he was forced out of the congregation.

The conflict was aggravated even more in the 1890s when my great-grandfather and one of his daughters, Sarah Matilda, began attending Pentecostal services held by a visiting evangelist. In tents and improvised shelters made of tree limbs, Sarah Matilda, my grandmother, spoke in tongues and performed holy dances at the services. Her sister and, later, her husband, bitterly disapproved. The arguments over doctrine and manner of worship, baptism of fire versus the traditional baptism of water, were so intense they verged on violence. My grandfather Morgan was furious when Sarah Matilda kept attending the Holiness meetings after their marriage. One evening he was so angry she had gone to a prayer meeting at her brother's house that he took his shotgun and fired repeatedly across the pasture. The effects of that quarrel were felt in the family even after I was born. Daddy used to point out to me the apple tree below the house where he went to cry at age seven when his mother died. He always took her side and blamed his father, I think, for her early death. When he was in his teens, he began attending Pentecostal services and participating in the shouting and speaking in tongues.

As a boy I, too, was taken to both Baptist and Pentecostal meetings, and I was always aware of the tension revolving around the conflict in the family and community. I was ashamed and frightened of the Pentecostal services, but they also thrilled me. In psychology courses in college, I read about glossolalia and the phenomenon of mass hypnosis in charismatic services. But I was almost forty years old before I could bring myself to write a poem about it.

It was only after writing "The Gift of Tongues" that I realized why the experience was almost too frightening to remember. For someone sensitive to language, to the crafting of language, nothing could be more scary than language gushing out of control. Total spontaneity, total inspiration, is as frightening in its way as writer's block, as tongue-tiedness. To have no control over the voice reduces the human, and the artist, to a haunted medium at best, a ventriloquist's dummy at worst.

Nevertheless, the power of the Pentecostal meeting was undeniable. The intensity of the experience is addictive and irreplaceable. In my novel, *The Truest Pleasure*, I made up a story set in the Carolina mountains at the turn of the century to show how a woman—a wife and mother—needs the services, has the hunger for a transcendent experience she can find nowhere else. As much as she looks for substitutes, she fails to

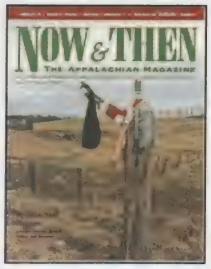
find any lasting equivalent except, perhaps, care for those she loves. To her, modern secular life is only partial life. Painful and painfully dividing as her quarrel with her husband is, she has no choice but to live her spiritual gift and destiny, embarrassing and excessive as it may seem to others.

No wonder lives have been wrenched apart, even shattered, by such possession and fulfillment. No wonder the rest of us can only marvel at, and perhaps envy, the awful gift. ❖

The Gift of Tongues

The whole Church got hot and vivid
with the rush of unhuman chatter
above the congregation,
and I saw my father looking at
the altar as though electrocuted.
It was a voice I'd never heard
but knew as from other centuries.
It was the voice of awful fire.
"What's he saying?" Ronald hissed
and jabbed my arm. "Probably Hebrew."
The preacher called out another
hymn, and the glissade came again,
high syllables not from my father's
lips but elsewhere, the flare of
higher language, sentences of light.
And we sand and sang again, but
no one rose as if from sleep to
be interpreter, explain the writing
on the air that still shone there like
blindness. None volunteered a gloss
or translation or receiver
of the message. My hands hurt
pulled from the pew's varnish
they'd gripped and sweated so. Later
standing under the high and plain-
sung pines on the mountain I clenched
my jaws like pliers, holding in
and savoring the gift of silence.

Robert Morgan's most recent book of poems is *Terrior* (Penguin 2011). *The Road from Gap Creek*, his latest novel, is a sequel to the best-selling novel *Gap Creek* (1999). A native of western North Carolina, he has taught at Cornell University since 1971.



"Appalachian Humor"
(vol. 14, no. 1)

From Medicine Shows to *Hee Haw*:
Comedy & Country Music

Loyal Jones

The way Roni Stoneman sees it, God himself had a hand in the beginnings of her career as a comedienne. Veronica (Roni) Stoneman is the youngest daughter of pioneer country musicians Ernest V. "Pop" and Hattie Frost Stoneman, originally of Galax, Va. Although Roni Stoneman is probably best known as the shrill hillbilly housewife, Ida Lee Nagger, on *Hee Haw*, she spent a good part of her youth picking banjo with the various incarnations of her family's musical group, The Stonemans. After she started performing on her own, she remembers that she dropped down on her knees before going on stage one day and prayed, "'Dear God, make me funny. Give me fun and laughter in my soul so I can make people laugh. The people need it so.'

"Right after that, I got up on the stage," the 58-year-old Stoneman recalled in a recent telephone interview, "and before I even got to the microphone, everybody was laughing. I started laughing, too, at the way God works."

Early Days

Roni Stoneman represents the close relationship that has long existed between humor and commercial country music ever since that musical genre's earliest days. In fact, many of the early commercial country musicians from Appalachia began their careers doing stints with the medicine shows that came to even the most remote areas, offering comedy and music to lure people who were as eager for entertainment as they were for medicine to treat their various ailments. Country music vocalist Roy Acuff, for instance, started out performing in blackface and as rube characters in Dr. Hauer's medicine show.

Sometimes, just sitting in the audience of a traveling medicine show was enough to influence a future country music performer. For example, Fred Smith, a North Carolina native, performed comedy on Knoxville, Tenn.'s WNOX in the 1930s with fellow Carolinean Red Rector in an act dubbed Red and Fred. Smith has vivid memories of seeing medicine shows as a child in Madison County, N.C.: "They'd sell the Big Chief Tonic . . . They had good shows, they had music, they done funny stuff. It'd grow every night, and the grand finale would be Saturday, and they'd pack them in. There wasn't no other entertainment back then. Everybody'd come to see it. I learned from them," he concludes.

Entertainers who took their shows on the road during the late 1920s and early 1930s quickly learned that appreciative radio listeners would turn out for personal appearances. These musicians generally performed over stations such as WNOX, Asheville, N.C.'s WWNC and Charlotte, N.C.'s WBT, WSAZ in Huntington, W.Va., and WOPI in Bristol, Tenn., until they had made the most of personal appearances in the listening area. They then moved on to another station and proceeded to develop new audiences.

By the mid-1930s, stations such as Chicago's WLS, Nashville, Tenn.'s WSM, and Atlanta's WSB became more powerful 50,000 watt stations. With their considerably stronger signals, these stations could be heard over wide areas, especially at night. Consequently, entertainers did not need to move from station to station so frequently. What musicians wanted was to get on a popular show on one of the bigger stations, shows such as WLS's *National Barn Dance*, WSM's *Grand Ole Opry*, WSB's *Barn Dance*, WNOX *Mid-Day Merry-Go-Round*, or Wheeling, W.Va.'s WWVA's *Mountaineer Jamboree*.

Recycling Vaudeville

Most of those who eventually became comedians were first of all musicians. However, on the longer radio shows, it became clear that good entertainment required more than music, especially since much of that music dealt with such dolesome subjects as murder, lost loves, and broken

dreams. John Lair, then program director of Chicago's WLS, began writing humorous scripts, teaming North Carolina's Myrtle Cooper and Scott Wiseman in 1933 for their long run as Lulu Belle and Scotty, the *Barn Dance* Sweethearts. In 1937, Lair created The Coon Creek Girls, led by Kentucky's strapping, nearly six-foot-tall Lily May Ledford. The Coon Creek Girls sang comic songs and dressed and acted humorously as Kentucky innocents.

Lowell Blanchard, a program director in the 1930s and 1940s at Knoxville's WNOX, saw early on that money could be made from country entertainment. Like Lair, he was a clever writer of scripts which included traditional jokes as well as old minstrel and vaudeville routines. Originally from Illinois, he persuaded aspiring musicians such as Archie Campbell from nearby Bull's Gap, Tenn., to perform them. One of the many comedians who did the "old man act," Campbell became a character named "Grandpappy."

When Campbell left Knoxville, first for the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville and later for *Hee Haw*, he continued to perform the routines he and Blanchard had written in Knoxville. Blanchard, who incidentally was a great straight man in his own right, produced scripts that were used by a variety of other comedy acts: Red and Fred, Bill Carlisle as Hot Shot Elmer, Homer and Jethro, and Lonzo and Oscar. In addition to comic songs, all of these acts did hillbilly humor that was similar to minstrel or vaudeville routines. The format was usually the "straight man" questioning the comedian. For example, Red Rector played straight man to Fred Smith in the following routine:

Red: *Somebody before the show wanted to know if you're from Spivey Mountain.*
Fred: *Yes, I was born there at an early age. Spivey Mountain is a little town up in North Carolina with a population of about 500.*
Red: *That is small.*
Fred: *You know, it never gets any larger, and it never gets any smaller, 'cause every time a new baby is born, somebody leaves town.*
Red: *You must have come from a large family.*
Fred: *Yeah, there was 19 of us.*
Red: *Nineteen altogether?*
Fred: *No, just one at a time.*

A Great Release

Road shows especially demanded a balanced and varied program. Jim McReynolds of the bluegrass band Jim and Jesse and the Virginia Boys, notes that "any early bluegrass band would always have a comedian on the program. For example, 'Joe Binglehead' was the comic name of our bass player, Dave Sutherland. We'd do about 15 minutes of comedy in our programs. A lot of times, Dave would have little funnies he'd pop anywhere in the program. If we saw we were losing the audience, we could always pull a joke or two to get things going again." From the late 1920s on, veteran musician Wade Mainer from Weaverville, N.C., played with Mainer's Mountaineers, the Sons of the Mountaineers, and most recently, with his wife, singer and instrumentalist Julia. He recalls gradually interspersing jokes with his mountain music as he toured the South during the Depression. "I realized that comedy was essential," Mainer says. Whole families, he says, would often walk for miles to come to his shows. "The kids would really go for the comedy. The old people would, too. They wanted something to entertain them and to get their minds off their hardships."

Tennessean Doyle Lawson, leader of the bluegrass band Quicksilver, also touched on comedy's therapeutic value. "Comedy was a way to relieve people of their daily stresses—to take their minds off their problems." Charlie Louvin, a country musician from Alabama who is still a regular on the Grand Ole Opry, concurs. Louvin, who with his brother Ira created a comedy act back in the 1940s called Sal Skinner, says, Comedy is a great release if you have a job you can't stand but have to keep. It gives you a night away from thinking of that job or your problems or a dim future—whatever the problem might be."

Defusing Anxieties & Fighting Stereotypes

Throughout her long career, Roni Stoneman played music to make a living, but her real love was making people laugh. Back in 1973, *Hee Haw* television series producer Sam Lavullo offered her a new outlet for comedic talent. "The Stoneman girls have been some pretty girls," she says, "but I wasn't the pretty one. I had this space between my teeth. June Carter Cash said, 'I want you to get your teeth crowned, and John and I want to pay for it.' I said, 'No.' I was afraid to get the space filled." She was concerned it might lessen her appeal as a comedienne.

"Sam Lavullo called me and said, 'You're just what we need on *Hee Haw*.' I went all dressed up. I fixed my hair and tried to make myself look so pretty. Bud Wingard, who was a writer on the show, looked at me and said, 'You're exactly what we need because we've got all the pretty girls we need.'

"I said, 'Thanks a lot.'"

In spite of this less than auspicious beginning, Stoneman went on to do the comedy she loved for nearly 20 years on the show. "I found comedy was a release for me when I got on stage. I was totally free—free!"

Mandolinist Ron Thomason, who founded the popular Ohio bluegrass band Dry Branch Fire Squad, and James "Sparky" Rucker, an African American musician and storyteller from Knoxville, Tenn., are both continuing the tradition of blending Appalachian music and comedy, each in his own way.

Thomason, who is known for his wry sense of humor, has a special reason for interspersing comedy with his music. Says the Honaker, Va., native, "The reason I started the band was that I wanted to do things that I felt very strongly needed to be done. Let's get rid of these Appalachian stereotypes. It's what I'm always trying to work on." He knows that most non-Appalachians have an image of Appalachians as ignorant, violent, and backward. To dispel such stereotypes, he presents witty, sophisticated humor.

He continues, "The culture our music comes out of is not there anymore. For people who are not part of the agrarian society, people who are listening to a music that comes out of a fully agricultural culture and a working ethic, there is a lot of information that they need." And so he is careful to describe to non-Appalachians the region's values, religion, work ethic, and general way of life. "I'm just trying to present that information in a way that is humorous and light and palatable—and yet informative—because what I am trying to do is to give people tools they need to enjoy our songs. They're highly political, and they are poignant." For example, he might talk about how Appalachian people have been exploited by groups such as coal operators and mill owners before singing a protest song such as "Aragon Mill." Or he may tell how his grandmother during the 1960s War on Poverty went to the county courthouse and inquired if they were taking any prisoners.

Sparky Rucker speaks frankly about how comedy works for him. As a self-described "big black man," he finds that he has to defuse the anxieties that particular image triggers in some of his audience members. "I find that if I can make the audience laugh, then I've got them," Rucker says. "I've got them for the whole show. Even if it's a solemn occasion, I find that first, you give them some levity. Then you can give them the sad songs. I like to take them from laughter to tears—and back again."

There is less comedy in music today, partly because more sophisticated audiences, while valuing the music, are uneasy with the old rural-oriented humor. Nevertheless, many entertainers such as Rucker and Thomason continue to inject humor into their shows. The humor serves various needs, but the main one is that all of us enjoy a laugh. It makes us forget our daily problems, fears, and disappointments, and it makes us feel joyful—if only for a little while. ❖

Loyal Jones, a native of western North Carolina, has dedicated his life to writing about and serving Appalachia. He lives in Berea, KY, where he served as the Director of the Appalachian Center at Berea College for three decades. He is working on a book about his three Appalachian jocular heroes.

"Cherokees"
(vol. 3, no. 3)

An Indian Walks In Me:

Credo

Marilou Awiakta

This poem was originally published in Awiakta's *Abiding Appalachia: Where Mountain and Atom Meet*, Memphis: St. Luke's Press, 1978.

An Indian walk in me.
She steps so firmly in my mind
that when I stand against the pine
I know we share the inner light
of the star that shines on me.
She taught me this, my Cherokee,
when I was a spindly child.
And rustling in dry forest leaves
I heard her say, "These speak."
She said the same of sighing wind,
of hawk descending on the hare
and Mother's care to draw
the cover snug around me . . .
of copperhead coiled on the stone
and blackberries warming in the sun—
"These speak." I listened . . .
Long before I learned the
universal turn of atoms, I heard
the Spirit's song that binds us
all as one. And no more
could I follow any rule
that split my soul.
My Cherokee left me no sign
except in hair and cheek
and this firm step of mind
that seeks the whole
in strength and peace.

Marilou Awiakta is an Eastern Band Cherokee author and poet whose works combine traditional Native American myths with contemporary regional issues. She was the co-founder of the Far Away Cherokee Association which is now the Native American Intertribal Association. Her books include *Abiding Appalachia: Where Mountain and Atom Meet*, *Rising Fawn and the Fire Mystery: A Child's Christmas in Memphis*, and *Selu: Seeking the Corn-Mother's Wisdom*. Awiakta currently lives in Memphis.

"Sports in Appalachia" (vol. 9, no. 3)

Cats

Jim Wayne Miller

CATS
have big bony heads, and skin
—not scales— slick as a dogwood hoehandle.
Their eyes, though soft as grapes, shine

like blue marbles. Hoboes, they live under bridges,
or in the trailer parks of lakes and rivers.
Caring only how a situation smells,

cats poke about in muddy waters,
street people sifting through trash in dumpsters.
When they work, they operate backhoes

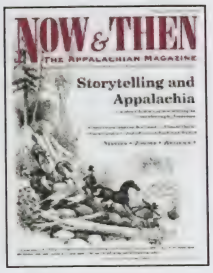
or bulldoze garbage in municipal landfills,
then hang out in underwater pool halls.
They tap your line with all the confidence

of a deputy sheriff bearing a warrant, rapping
on your door. Larcenous, they rip off
your monofilament by the yard. Horsed

to shore, they wrestle you in the rocks, stab
you with a hidden shiv. And yet, when eaten
back of an RV by lake or river

by guys wearing CAT hats, their meat's
sweet as their disposition's mean and ugly.

Jim Wayne Miller (1936–1996) was a prolific writer revered in the field of Appalachian studies. During his 33-year tenure at Western Kentucky University, he worked to promote regional voices. As an innovative poet, essayist, novelist, and short story writer, Miller was a founding father to the Appalachian renaissance.



"Storytelling and Appalachia" (vol. 10, no. 3)

A First Amendment Poem

Jo Carson

Meaning what I say is not saying what
I mean and yet I
do not always know
the difference.
I cannot speak
the unspeakable,
I say instead those things
best left unsaid.
Life is short,
love is unrequited,
the dead do not
take questions.

I can tell this:
there is enough
of truth to offend
everybody.

Jo Carson (1946-2011) was a writer and storyteller whose work often focused on Appalachia. She wrote poetry, plays, essays, children's books, and performance material she called "People Pieces." She was the recipient of numerous awards, including the Kesselring Prize for Best New Play in America for her play *Daytrips*.

"Our 10th Anniversary Celebration" (vol. 11, no. 2)

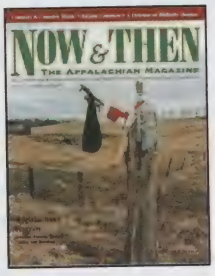
My Father Doesn't Tell Stories

Linda Parsons

My father slices a summer tomato on the counter.
I say I remember summers at Great Aunt Nelle's,
picking ripe Tommy Toes, the juice running down
my chin and arms. I say I remember a glider
on the marble porch, peacocks on the wallpaper,
the woman who cared for Papa instead of marrying.
I say what happened to the shoebox of photos
after she died, the picture of a man in Union blues?
It was blue, he said. *I saw it.*
I wait for more, for him to enter the dim room
of memory and find the hidden family silver.

But my father doesn't tell stories.
What's now is now, what's past is past.
Though once he told how his grandmother covered
all the mirrors when it stormed, afraid of drawing
the charge inside, of knowing the full face of light.
My father salts his tomato and recalls no garden,
no huge pantry with the single, swinging light.
I stand at the mirror as one of the family.
No one before me has left a glistening trail.
No sun is at my back, bursting its seeds in my mouth,
stretching darkly behind me.

Linda Parsons Marion is an editor at the University of Tennessee and the author of three poetry collections. She served as poetry editor of *Now & Then* magazine for 14 years and has received literary fellowships from the Tennessee Arts Commission. She also received the Associated Writing Programs' Intro Award and the 2012 George Scarbrough Award in Poetry. Marion's work has appeared in journals such as *The Georgia Review*, *Iowa Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Asheville Poetry Review*, and *Shenandoah* and in numerous anthologies, including *Listen Here: Women Writing in Appalachia* and *The Southern Poetry Anthology, Volume III: Contemporary Appalachia* and *Volume VI: Tennessee*.



"Appalachian Humor"
(vol. 14, no. 1)

Flea Market

Jeff Daniel Marion

You come here to haggle, seek a bargain,
find the right tool or trinket: the hunt's
the ticket, a ramble down the rows
to the right table, baskets and cardboard boxes
stacked three deep. You begin to sort
through gears and knobs, rachets and plumb bobs,
clockguts and counterweights, skeleton keys,
pink flamingo yard ornaments and bathroom fixtures,
a tackle box of old lures, Rappala minnow
minus a treble hook, lead sinkers, a porcupine quill
stuck in a cork float, every cast-off item
a clue to a mystery waiting to be
unraveled. You reel from the sheer joy
of it all, reveling in the flotsam and jetsam
of high tide. Here is the world's dictionary,
language of hardware, of the broken and abandoned,
archaic and arcane, and alphabet of abundance,
the weekend's long ode to excess.

Jeff Daniel Marion's ninth book of poetry *Letters to the Dead* won the Appalachian Book of the Year award in 2014. In 2015 the University of Tennessee Press will publish a collection of essays on his work. He lives in New Market, Tennessee, by the banks of the Holston River.

"Appalachian Music"
(vol. 2, no. 3)

Vein of Words
Jim Wayne Miller
Big Timber, Montana:
Seven Buffaloes Press, 1984

In his latest collection of poems, *Vein of Words*, Jim Wayne Miller is as usual provocative and interesting, but there is a unique direction in this volume. With some exceptions, his poems' subjects are the art and craft of writing itself.

While poems about poetry are not themselves novel, writing them in a strongly localized Appalachian voice and frame of reference is. Here the regional voice presumes to provide aesthetic guidance in a universalizing mode. To me, this presumption is ironic. *Vein of Words* means to answer the unspoken yet widely-held assumption that the Appalachian writer is somehow "limited." While he/she may have a native talent for describing mountain farms, foxfire folkways, and the like, he/she must break out into the bigger, wider geographical and intellectual world in order to learn, let alone teach, the High Truths of Art. *Vein of Words* identifies the universal qualities of creativity with regional topography and experience, implying that no experience beyond that of the region is necessary to the achievement of even the highest goals.

But there are some other dimensions to this aesthetic theme. The subject of most of these poems is *words* themselves, and the voice in most of the poems, very close to the author's own voice, is that of someone who mines for words, not someone who uses words to describe the experience of mining. Thus the "Appalachian" realm is in a sense reduced, or distanced—it becomes more a storehouse of metaphors than an actual place. This is not necessarily a criticism, because one might consider a culture's literary "maturity" to have been reached when its artists are secure enough about the validity of their space to employ it to further ends, rather than continually reaffirming its actual existence.

Also, many of these poems arise from Miller's own experience directing writing workshops, and they use Appalachian figures to make the reader understand issues of creativity by couching them in the language of familiar experience. The result is inspirational and, you might say, "aesthetically populist" verse. "Try to think of your first draft as a creek/in flood time, roaring out of banks" ("Poetry Workshop"). As it were, any aspiring artist who has experienced this scene can learn from the swelling flood figure what stance to take toward a rough draft. This persistent insertion of poetry into the natural landscape eventually has an almost disturbing effect—every external scene is actually laid out inside the creating consciousness;

> Like rocks in a cultivated field
> the poems are always there,
> and never an end to them . . .
> ("Thinking About my Poems")

Miller can be categorical enough when he wants to in these poems: "Poems lit with the glow of grand abstraction/are at the same time local, low, and plain" ("Notes to a Student . . .")—but they do not end up, for me, enunciating any particular poetics or aesthetic theory. The irony expounded at the beginning of this review is complemented by a second irony—the Appalachian writer is actually sophisticated enough to know that there are no High Truths of Art to which all can subscribe; and this is a High Truth which the non-Appalachian writer is often too provincial to perceive. The poet compares experience and creative activity in illuminating ways, but the individual reader/writer must find his/her own meaning in this illumination; the poems are not lessons, but interchanges; as one of his titles proclaims, "Reader, We're in this Poem Together."

A note of recognition should be given to Art Cuelho, who is making a singular contribution with Seven Buffaloes Press to the publication of contemporary Appalachian writers as well as other regional and minority writers. His full list can be obtained from Seven Buffaloes Press, Box 249, Big Timber, Montana 59011. ❖

Fred Waage is a professor in the Literature & Language Department of ETSU, co-founder of *Now & Then* and its first editor.

"Working in Appalachia" (vol. 5, no. 1)

Storming Heaven
Denise Giardina
New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1987

High on the list of the hazardous occupations is that of the coal miner. Anyone who has worked in a mine can give numerous chilling examples of the dangers faced every day. Ironically, those who have dared to claim the right to safer working conditions and benefits appropriate to the risks inherent in the job have found themselves facing yet another deadly hazard—the hostility of mine owners and operators.

In her novel *Storming Heaven*, Denise Giardina illuminates a little-known chapter in history, the conflict between miners and mine owners that culminated in the Battle of Blair Mountain in 1921. Although reared and educated in West Virginia, Giardina had never head of that battle, which she discovered had involved 10,000 miners pitted against not only the mine owners and their mercenaries, but also against the federal government itself, which provided bombs, guns and poison gas to subdue the strikers. Giardina's research for the book was careful and extensive, and major events of the novel are based firmly on documented evidence.

Despite its basis in fact, the book doesn't read like a history, nor even like most historical novels, because its author wisely chose to narrate the story in the voices of her major characters. Reading *Storming Heaven* is like listening to four people one might have known, people talking not to an audience, or even to each other, but to themselves. The voices of these characters are unselfconscious, natural, authentic. And Giardina has done a wonderful job of capturing the dialect of Appalachia.

At the heart of the novel is Clabe Lloyd's boy Rondal, who learns early about the mining life when he must leave school at age 10 to work alongside his daddy in the mines. Experiencing firsthand the long, dangerous hours in the mine and the salary that left most miners unable to provide for their families' needs, Rondal becomes convinced that the only hope of improving the miners' lost is the union. Even after he witnesses the murder of a union organizer thrown alive into a blazing furnace as a lesson to all who would support the union, Rondal remains committed to the establishment of that union.

Another of the book's narrators, Carrie Bishop has her own mission: to relieve suffering and preserve life. Half convinced that her scornful father was right when he predicted that she was a girl too ugly and stubborn and independent to ever marry, Carrie grows into a delightfully unconventional woman who makes good use of her intelligence, common sense and compassion through her chosen profession of nursing. Although other mountain folk migrate thankfully to the cities, Carrie says, "I have travelled outside the mountains, but never lived apart from them . . . There is enough to study in these hills to last a lifetime." No sooner does Carrie recognize the justice of the miners' cause than she makes that cause her own.

Possibly because she herself lived as a child in a West Virginia coal camp, Giardina is particularly sensitive to the unusual challenges faced by the inhabitants of the camps. She tells us of Vernie Lloyd, who cultivated flower boxes filled with red and white petunias, and every day "splashed the petals with water and gently wiped them clean with a dry cloth"; of the typhoid which spread rapidly among the residents of the camp; and of a diet consisting mainly of beans, gravy and cornbread.

Besides vividly depicting a way of life, *Storming Heaven* examines some of the difficult decisions that the coming of the coal industry forced the people of Appalachia to make. For Miles Bishop, who hates farming, the choice is easy: he is delighted to ally himself with the Boston mine owners who recruit him to manage their mines. But increasingly Miles realizes that allegiance to the owners involves him inevitably in the crimes of exploitation and violence that his employers commit against the people. For Albion Freeman, a minister, the choice is never easy; he believes in charity and non-violence, but his commitment to freedom and justice for the workers leads him into situations where violence seems the only recourse. Even Carrie Bishop, whose vocation is healing, finds herself wielding a machine gun in a desperate effort to save the striking miners from slaughter at the hands of the mine owners' hired gunhands.

Storming Heaven is a book about the politics of land ownership, about the conflict between rich and poor, about the human longing for love and justice and freedom. It's a war story and a love story. It's a compelling look at memorable characters caught up in a life-and-death struggle, the results of which can be

seen today. "Progress," claims Rondal Lloyd, "is always at somebody's expense." Denise Giardina's novel shows quite clearly at whose expense the "progress" brought about by the coming of coal to Appalachia was achieved, and it raises poignant questions about the ultimate value of such progress. ❖

Since leaving Appalachia, Laurie Lindberg has been teaching at Ball State University as an Assistant Professor of Honors Humanities. Her courses include not only the traditional Western humanities but also special topics courses and field studies to England. A course which she designed and especially enjoys is a course about stereotypes, with the focus on deconstructing stereotypes of the family in literature, film, and music by and about Appalachians. She misses the mountains.

"Sense of Place in Appalachia"
(vol. 6, no. 2)

Foxfire Reconsidered: A Twenty-Year Experiment in Progressive Education
John L. Puckett
Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1989

John L. Puckett's probing and occasionally unflattering portrait of the *Foxfire* project deserves the careful scrutiny of anyone concerned with Appalachian Studies, creative approaches to pedagogy or modern cultural history. Major themes of the Appalachian Studies movement are subjected to critical reexamination. These include the reversal of stigmatizing imagery of Southern mountain people, attachment to family, friends and homeplace, celebration of self-sufficiency and rediscovery of personal authenticity through return to a supposedly wholesome and natural lifestyle.

Over a five year period, Puckett conducted extensive interviews with the creator of *Foxfire*, Eliot Wigginton, with Wigginton's students, colleagues and administrators, and with residents of Rabun County in North Georgia. He also critiqued the limited scholarly literature dealing with *Foxfire* and the many regional cultural journalism projects it has inspired. He explored the philosophical assumptions of Wigginton's pedagogy, which was strongly grounded in the thought of John Dewey and of Appalachian Studies.

As Wigginton explains in his autobiographical work *Sometimes A Shining Moment,* his original intent in developing a magazine documenting local traditions was to give the bored and alienated students in his high school English course an opportunity to do something real, something personally meaningful. He could not predict the compilation of his student collecting projects would result in one of the great commercial publishing successes in recent history. The royalties garnered from the sale of 5.7 million *Foxfire* books have provided the means to pursue a variety of progressive social and educational experiments.

Why were the *Foxfire* books so popular? What needs were they filling for their readers? During the same period that spawned *The Whole Earth Catalog, Mother Earth News* and Alex Haley's *Roots,* the *Foxfire* books helped to satiate the yearning of the rootless for roots, of the transient for traditions. Perhaps this was nothing more than a latter-day expression of pastoral romanticism. If so, maybe we need to cultivate greater understanding and appreciation of the role of romanticism in modern social and cultural life, particularly as manifested in the impulse to preserve and revive folk traditions in response to the expansion of applied science, industry, urbanization and bureaucracy.

Foxfire, however, must be considered more than a manifestation of modern pastoral romanticism. It is also an attempt to change the perceptions of students and their communities in positive ways. Ideally this empowers them to gain some degree of control over their own lives and destinies (though not necessarily by rejecting modernity and returning to preindustrial subsistence). This, too, was part of the human-scale, decentralized alternative community concept that blossomed in the late 60s and early 70s. By the mid-80s, however, it had become evident that the idealistic efforts of *Foxfire* to build local businesses run by former students had negligible impact on the course of economic growth in the Rabun County area, which still continued to witness an influx of summer people and real estate developers.

Not all of Wigginton's educational experiments have been successful either. Only a few of the cultural journalism projects inspired by *Foxfire* have survived more than 10 years. Even fewer have managed to attract the attention of commercial publishing houses. But Puckett freely acknowledges that Wigginton's accomplishments are of genuine value and significance. We also must recognize that *Foxfire* philosophy and method of education is still evolving. The notion of providing students with experiences that draw history and culture to enhance self-esteem and basic

educational competencies is still winning advocates and supporters.

Though the project was harshly criticized by some professional folklorists at its inception, those of us who have been pushing for the integration of folklore into elementary and secondary school curricula have been encouraged by Wigginton's efforts. Various states have implemented folklore and folk arts in the schools programs. Mention should also be made of the emergence in the past two years of the Appalachian Youth Conference held in conjunction with the Appalachian Studies Conference. This program brings together teachers and students from the region who study and interpret traditional culture and contemporary creative writing with an Appalachian focus.

Puckett may be correct in stating that *Foxfire*'s reputation exceeds its actual educational impact, but the final chapter of the exciting history remains to be written. Read in conjunction with Wigginton's *Sometimes A Shining Moment, Foxfire Reconsidered* should provide a stimulating basis for discussion in courses dealing with the anthropology of education, applied folklore or Appalachian Studies. Enthusiastically recommended. ❖

Richard Blaustein is Professor Emeritus of sociology and anthropology at East Tennessee State University. He is the former director of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services and the founder of *Now & Then* magazine.

"Appalachian Art Folk & Fine" (vol. 6, no. 3)

First and Last Words
Fred Chappell
Baton Rouge: Louisana State University Press, 1989

The ordinary person "falls in love, or reads Spinoza," T.S. Eliot writes in *The Metaphysical Poets,* "and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other . . ." But a poet might put the two experiences together to form a new whole, for the poet's mind "is constantly amalgamating disparate experience . . . "

In *First and Last Words,* his eighth collection (four of which form the tetralogy *Midquest*), Fred Chappell continues to delight and astonish his readers by putting together disparate experiences in such a way as to create poems seamless in their texture and structure.

Chappell is simultaneously attentive to detail and to overall design not only in individual poems but also with respect to their placement within the collection. His title refers to the practice of writing prologue and epilogue poems to classic works of literature. Here Chappell extends the practice to include works of art, musical compositions and philosophical and scientific treatises. Part one contains new prologues not only to the Book of Job, the *Oresteia,* and Virgil's *Georgics,* among others, but also to Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring.* Part two, "Entr'acte," includes poems occasioned by a Reubens' drawing, *Study of a Woman With Crossed Hands,* and Vermeer's *The Astronomer.* In part three, "Epilogues," he writes epilogues not only to *The Wind in the Willows,* Einstein's *Relativity,* and Goethe's *Theory of Colors,* but also, in "Remodeling the Hermit's Cabin," to the Constitution of the United States.

Chappell's reach through time and across space is impressive. He draws on the homely particulars of his Appalachian background in the opinion prologue, "An Old Mountain Woman Reading the Book of Job":

> The veiny wrist, the knobby
> finger-joints,
> The scar-ceased palm, the thumb she
> lifts to wet
> And lift the corner of the memoried
> page,
> Turning once more through Job's
> bewilderment:
> What histories are written into her
> hand . . .

This opening poem is followed by a prologue to the *Oresteia* which focuses on "The Watchman" who ". . . keeps his vigil on the roof/ Of the ruining house . . ." until "The murderous birth of justice has begun." The third poem end with a description of sundown which

> ...still draws the chickens to their
> purring roost,
> The cow to the milking stall, the farmer
> to his porch to
> watch
> Whether the soaring constellations
> promise rain.

The scene, which might be mistaken for some Appalachian valley, is from "Patience," a prologue to

The Georgics and describes a time when "war grinds over the world and all/ Its politics..." in the Roman Empire of the first century B.C. Like Thomas Hardy's "In time of 'The Breaking of Nations,'" Chappell's "Patience" considers what is great and small, transient and timeless.

Not categories understood apart from life—art, music, philosophy and science—are approached as expressions and achievements of life, no less capable of being experienced than birdsong of a child's laugher. In "My Hand Place on a Reuben's Drawing," Chappell interprets the drawing in terms of music when he describes the *Woman with Crossed Hands* in contrast to Reubans' usual:

> Outsized orchestra of Flemish flesh,
> The tuba bellies and thighs, kettledrum
> buttocks,
> The pale blonde appoggiatura breasts,
> as
> ...chamber music, intimate
> Through a little withdrawn, modestly
> Intoning a demure contralto line.

An allusion to myth vividly describes the woman's hands:

> They emerge from the blouse-cuff—
> cascade of scribble,
> Ebullient froth of marking—
> as Venus rose
> Out of the sea from whole
> and ready as sunlight.
> The smell of earth about them,
> undertone
> of cabbage, onion, potato,
> the branmeal loaf.

Everywhere Chappell's metaphors are bold and illuminating. "The garden is a book about the gardener," while "The gardener is a book about her garden." In "Remodeling the Hermit's Cabin," the mountain cabin to be remodeled for a Florida buyer is no mere occasion for "an epilogue to the Constitution of the United States," but a metaphor for the document. Speaking of both cabin and Constitution, Chappell concludes chillingly:

> "It looks kind of sad and busted,
> what we've done,"
> I said.
> "That Florida feller will tack up
> plastic,"
> He said, "and put him in
> an ice machine,
> And have him radar carport
> and a poodle
> He's trained to count his money.
> These modem days
> We're all a bunch of cowbirds,
> you know that?"

Chappell's superb carpentry joins cabin and Constitution, percept and concept, sensation and thought. He is that particular kind of poet for whom reading Spinoza (or, in the case of "Ideally Grasping the Actual Flower" by Kant) can be just as much an experience as falling in love or shooting a wild river. For Chappell, as for the Metaphysicals, a thought is an experience that can be felt as immediate as the odor of a rose. Whether he ranges in deep or out far or, as it sometimes seems, moves in both directions at once, Chappell brings back the actual flower ideally grasped, like "one's own porch light seen from a distant planet." ❖

Jim Wayne Miller (1936–1996) was a prolific writer revered in the field of Appalachian studies. During his 33-year tenure at Western Kentucky University, he worked to promote regional voices. As an innovative poet, essayist, novelist, and short story writer, Miller was a founding father to the Appalachian renaissance.

"Appalachia and the Environment"
(vol. 12, no. 1)

Selu: Seeking the Corn Mother's Wisdom
Marilou Awiakta
Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1993

Only in this last decade of the 20th century has the importance of biological diversity to ecosystem heath been finally acknowledged in law and acted upon. And perhaps the greatest breakthrough in the first decade of the 21st century will be the general recognition among United States policy makers of the importance of gender equality and ethnic diversity to the development of effective solutions to society's

problems. When gender and ethnic diversity finally arrive, those able to walk through the newly opened doors will be in debt to leaders like Marilou Awiakta who predicts:

> Not only are racism, sexism and distain for Mother Earth coming to harvest in the 1990s, they also seem to be reseeding themselves. Thoughts and energy to counter them are also coming to harvest and, hopefully, will reseed in an even stronger strain, so that the twenty-first century will begin a new era of peace and justice. I dream this not because I am a romantic, but because I come from survivor people who revere the sacred law.

Selu: Seeking the Corn-Mother's Wisdom is a treasure chest of thoughtful prose and 35 insightful poems written by Marilou Awiakta. If widely distributed and read, Ms. Awiakta's book may do for the ethnic diversity and gender equality movements what Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* did for the environmental movement 33 years ago: give its missionaries a common text chock full of moving examples and lessons from which to preach the gender/ethnic equality gospel.

A Cherokee/Appalachian writer and storyteller whose family has lived in the Southern Appalachian mountains for seven generations, Ms. Awiakta grew up in the high-tech world of Oak Ridge when the atom bomb was under development there. Now a resident of Memphis, she translates the ancient wisdom of our continent's indigenous peoples for us into the vocabulary and idiom of America today.

Who is "Selu"? Pronounced by the Cherokee "Say-loo," she is in Cherokee tradition the mother of us all and spokesperson for the Creator. Says a Cherokee medicine man: "In the beginning, the Creator made our Mother Earth. Then came Selu, Grandmother Corn." Awiakta explains:

> For thousands of years, indigenous peoples of the Americas have formally recognized corn as a teacher of wisdom, the spirit inseparable from the grain. Through corn's natural ways of growing and being, the spirit sings of strength, respect, balance, harmony. Of adaptability, cooperation, unity in diversity. Songs of survival . . . Grandmother Selu [teaches that] if you take [from Mother Earth], you have to give back respect and thankfulness.

Strengthening the political hand of women and minorities will increase the clout of the environmental movement as well. Women, with their innate attitude of respect for nature (in contrast to men's generally utilitarian mentality), always have provided much of the backbone for wildlife and other natural resources protection campaigns. Women formed the bulk of the grass-roots volunteer organizers, telephone callers, and letter writers who have risen as needed to help save key remnants of our natural and cultural heritage. Notes Awiakta:

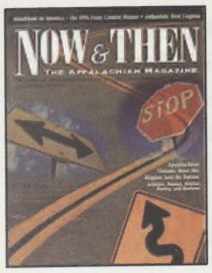
> The linear, Western masculine mode of thought has been too intent on conquering nature to learn from her a basic truth: To separate the gender that bears life from the power to sustain it is as destructive as to tempt nature itself . . . Such linear, polar thinking generates so much anger on both sides that there is no consensual climate where reasonable solutions can be found. The center cannot hold. And the beast of catastrophe slouches toward us. We need a network of the committed to ward it off. Women at large can use our traditional intercessory skills to create this network through organizations, through education, and through weaving together conscientious protagonists in industry, science and government.

Note the respect accorded *all* viewpoints and the image of a strong basket woven of different materials.

North America's first peoples—unlike those of us with European forebears—traditionally have been taught to consider themselves one with nature, with a sacred tie to Mother Earth. Severance of this tie, observes Awiakta, is basic to Western thought. The result: "The attitude of use and consume . . . render[s] the web of life at a brutal rate."

Selu is uniquely stimulating. The poems and essays contained in this volume touched me as no other book has in years. I commend it to all interested in grassroots based movement to protect the quality of human life based on a reverence for life. *Selu* should serve as a point of departure for renewed efforts in communities and capitals everywhere to avert the irreversible downward spiraling in the nature-based quality of our lives. ❖

Rupert Cutler of Roanoke, Virginia, has been editor of *Virginia Wildlife*, managing editor of *National Wildlife*, assistant executive director of The Wilderness Society, senior vice president of the National Audubon Society, president of Defenders of Wildlife, a Michigan State University faculty member, and assistant secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In Roanoke, he was executive director of Explore Park and the Western Virginia Land Trust and served on the Roanoke City Council.



"Appalachian Visions"
(vol. 13, no. 2)

Hillbillyland: What the Movies Did to the Mountains and What the Mountains Did to the Movies
J. W. Williamson
Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995

Trying to decipher American popular culture, particularly as shown in the movies, is a bit like trying to nail the proverbial serving of Jell-O to the wall. You can see it, you can tell what flavor it is, you can even hold it if you really want to, but you can't quite bring it under control. No matter which way you push it, it just comes back the other way.

But with popular culture, you need to try at least to understand what's going on. Something so pervasive as a long-standing cinematic image, whether it be of the cowboy or the vamp or the hillbilly, obviously has significance, but knowing what that significance is for certain is an illusive goal. The effort, however, is always well worth the trouble and often reveals surprisingly new flavors.

In his most recent book, Appalachian State University English professor J.W. Williamson has tackled a seemingly narrow aspect of popular cinematic culture and has confronted much of what we moviegoers have long suspected. He has also found much that is new. Williamson's subject is the image of the hillbilly in the movies, but it is not the precise topic it might at first seem.

Let's for a moment oversimplify greatly what is a very complex process. When we take the time to think about it, we realize that we have often consciously relied on the movies to form our opinion on all sorts of subjects. And in a society that is reading less and less, the movies sometimes provide us with our only glimpse into certain worlds. It is not so hard, then, to realize the enormous influence movies have in forming cultural stereotypes.

Williamson has studied hundreds of movies, from early silent films such as *Billie—the Hill Billy* (1915) to later pictures such as *Sergeant York* (1941) with Gary Cooper or *A Face in the Crowd* (1957) with Andy Griffith. These three films alone present three very different characterizations—one humorous, another pious and forthright, the third conniving—and yet all conjure up elements of the stereotyped hillbilly persona.

To those types, he has added films such as *Raising Arizona* (1987), *Thelma and Louise* (1991), and *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992). Because he tackled such a broad range of seemingly disparate films, he has been widely criticized by various reviewers.

It is important, though, to realize the wide cultural view he is after. The hillbillies we know so well—from, for example, the comic *Ma and Pa Kettle* series (1949-1954) or the dark, threatening *Deliverance* (1972)—hardly begin to explain fully the many ways in which the hillbilly has entered our consciousness.

Thus, Williamson defines the word *hillbilly* as representing something altogether more inclusive and complex, as an individual seen as "rough, rural, poor but fruitful, blatantly anti-urban, and often dangerous, but not necessarily hailing from the Southern Appalachians or even from any mountains." That way, the James brothers raised in hardscrabble Missouri and robbing banks in rural Minnesota in *The Long Riders* (1980) are as good a subject for study as the Doolin brothers running moonshine in Harlin County, Ky., in *Thunder Road* (1958). They all come from the rough, and "hilly side of the American economy."

That's a fair definition, particularly considering how Williamson is interested in not only in what the images are, but also in how we as viewers have reacted to them—and, more importantly, how we have used them. Williamson skillfully points out that the hillbilly image embodies our sense of fun (*No Time for Sergeants*, 1958), our fears (*Bad Georgia Road*, 1977), our hopes (*Coal Miner's Daughter*, 1980), even our lusts (*Child Bride of the Ozarks*, 1937), and often our muddled sense of history (*Allegheny Uprising*, 1939). What make these movies such favorites, Williamson concludes, is that mainstream Americans find a vicarious, unbridled, sometimes uncontrollable freedom in all of the many hillbilly characterizations.

There is, however, a darker side to the exchange between viewer and stereotype. It is the identical audience, the author adds, that used the very same films as an easy benchmark to confirm its own presumably higher station in society. In the end, the down-home ways of L'il Abner, Sheriff Buford T. Justice, or Blaze Starr work against themselves. It all says far more about us as viewers than it does about the hillbilly as subject. And that makes this study of a popular image well worth careful reading. ❖

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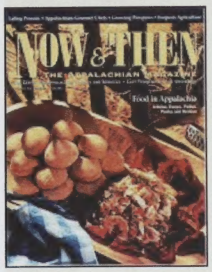

"Food in Appalachia"
(vol. 15, no. 1)

Mountain Country Cooking: A Gathering of the Best Recipes from the Smokies to the Blue Ridge
Mark F. Sohn
New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996

My mother is an excellent country cook. As someone once said about her, "She knows how to put a good taste on things." Trouble is, other than the two volumes she calls on when baking—a Spry (of shortening fame) cookbook and one from Watkins Products—she doesn't use published recipes. So I was glad to see that Mark Sohn included man of her (and my) favorites in *Mountain Country Cooking*. To write this cookbook, Sohn gathered the recipes and insight into mountain cooking gleaned from his discussions with Appalachian cooks; he also researched and referenced many regional and classic cookbooks.

Sohn recognizes a time-honored Appalachian practice of meal planning in the cookbook's organization: He includes "starches" (sweet and white potatoes, corn, and pinto beans) as a distinct category to include in the meal. Other categories include mountain country breakfasts (don't miss the chocolate gravy), breads (including corn bread and dumplings), salads and vegetables, soups and casseroles, country meats, and seafood and wild game.

There are two sections on desserts; not many cookbooks can boast an entire dessert section dedicated to "delights, cobblers, apples, pawpaws, sassafras, and pecans." In "Beverages and Hospitality Extras," Sohn includes mountain favorites such as boiled custard, Tennessee eggnog, hot cocoa, apple butter, pickled beets, and chow chow. Altogether, there are almost 300 Southern and mountain favorites, including buttermilk biscuits, soup beans, jam and stack cake, corn bread dressing, macaroni and cheese, and fried apples.

Readers will like the easy-to-follow format, which presents the ingredient list as a sidebar on the page. Also helpful is a "difficulty" rating for each recipe that is based on the number of ingredients and steps involved in preparation. Besides the original recipes, Sohn includes "healthy choice alternatives": instructions on how to reduce the number of calories or fat grams to suit today's emphasis on a leaner lifestyle.

As with any regional cookbook, some of the ingredients for recipes are not commonly available. In certain cases, substitutes are suggested—for example, bananas for pawpaws—and Sohn has included a list of mail order sources for a number of hard-to-find ingredients. A glossary of food terms and expressions provides insight into both the Appalachian diet and dialect.

This cookbook is much more than a collection of regional recipes, however. It is an entertaining story about Appalachian cooking. At times, it reads like a memoir as Sohn, who grew up in Oregon, tells of his first taste of corn bread as a teenager while having breakfast with his father at the Hotel Soaper in Henderson, Ky., or recounts interactions with friends and neighbors in Eastern Kentucky, where is now a psychology professor at Pikeville College.

His descriptions of the characteristics of corn bread are so evocative, you can see and taste the crunchy texture and brown color of the crust. For some dishes, the author includes interesting information about origins or names, naturally tracing many Appalachian recipes to England and Scotland. In addition, Sohn, who has studied cooking in France, provides basic cooking instruction and offers insights into those confounding "science-of-cooking" questions, such as why it is that dumpling fall apart.

While you won't find recipes for the entrées from restaurants such as Ruby Tuesday or Grady's (also Southern traditions), you will find honest-to-goodness Appalachian recipes. I've even tried some of them out on Mama—and she approves. ❖

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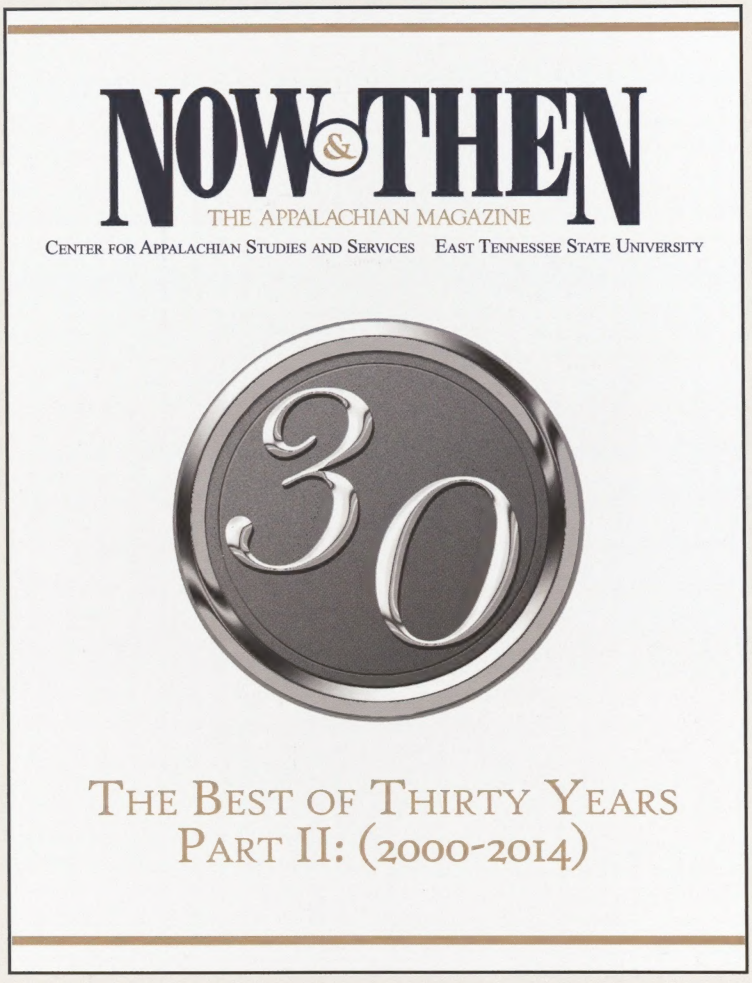
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30
THE BEST OF THIRTY YEARS
PART II: (2000-2014)

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Over the years, the Archives of Appalachia at East Tennessee State University has been an indispensable resource for Now and Then. *This photo of a smiling woman from the Walden family, circa 1920, suggests a very good day of fishing.*